



A TALE
OF THE ENGLISH REFORMATION



SWINDERBY SUPPORTING THE WOUNDED EARL.

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CLIFFORD CASTLE;

A TALE OF

THE ENGLISH REFORMATION.

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

T the time of which the following story treats, the living voice of John de Wycliffe had long ceased to utter a warning cry against the corruptions and false doctrines of the church to which he outwardly belonged, and which was then established in England; but, although dead, he yet spoke. His testimony for Scripture truth was handed down from sire to son through his translation of the Bible; it remained to show how different was its teaching from the creed of that church.

Truth is indestructible, and however man may obscure it, will come forth as gold tried in the fire. Before this, the most distinguished of the English reformers, many witnesses had arisen in this and in other lands; even the dark ages furnished some, for true conviction of sin is too heavy a load to be removed from a soul by mere human contrivances. No self-inflicted torture nor priestly absolution can pacify an awakened conscience; no stricken one has ever found a remedy but the ransom of God's providing—He who is 'the way, the truth, and the life,' in whom is complete redemption. Many hidden ones have gone down to the grave, leaving no name behind, to whom Jesus spake with the still small voice that alone can quell the tempest within, while others were hunted on the mountains, seeking refuge in dens and caves of the earth; but the light was not put out even by the force of that terrible power that traded in the souls of men, and made

whole hecatombs of martyrs. The Albigenses and Waldenses drank of the waters that flow from the smitten rock, even from apostolic days. Britain lacked not her witnesses; Scotland had not quite forgotten her ancient Culdees before the same truths they taught began to be uttered by the lollards of Kyle; indeed, it might do good service to search into the forgotten records of the past for proof-presumptive, at least, that the pure gospel, though driven into corners, maintained an existence in this island from the time it was first preached to our heathen forefathers, until the little stream, threading its way through darkness and obscurity, mingled with the great flood that came in, at length, upon the world from many a source. Yet Rome perplexes the ignorant by the question, 'Where was your church before the Reformation?' England had her confessors before Luther; and it may be useful to remind the young of this fact, by a narrative embodying a statement of the truth for which they contended and suffered. In this belief, the writer has remodelled a book published some years ago, and now offers it in a revised and more concise shape.

CLIFFORD CASTLE.

CHAPTER I.

SELDOM had there been more urgent need to conciliate those who 'had the might,' than during the Wars of the Roses. The upper ranks alone might be said to feel any interest in the eventual triumph of either party; the common people followed their feudal lords, caring very little about the side on which they were ranged, and equally willing to contend for the opposite, should their leaders happen to change their colours, which they not unfrequently did, and by the unprecedented variety of fortune which marked those changing times, occasionally outwitted themselves.

Among those who with undeviating faith had adhered to the Lancastrian interest, was the family of De Clifford. At the period our story commences, Clifford Castle was inhabited by the Countess de Clifford and her two sons, their father having been dead several years. The non-age of the young Earl had hitherto prevented his being personally involved in the struggle, but his prepossessions were all in favour of the red rose; and just arrived at the time of life when he might be expected to act for himself, he might have thrown the weight of his influence into the scale ere the defeat at Hexham, had not private family circumstances effectually restrained him. His father, anxious for the welfare of his house in these

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perilous times, had fixed his eldest son's majority at twenty-five, appointing his wife sole guardian; he knew she was energetic and determined,—the abilities of the heir were yet unproved. The Countess held the control thus delegated to her with a steady hand, and steered her way cautiously through surrounding difficulties. Her own high connections increased her influence, and she enjoyed, in her sphere, a kind of undisputed dictatorship.

She had early imbibed a dislike to Queen Margaret, by whom she had imagined herself not sufficiently appreciated. Quite aware of her own importance, she was offended at the queen's apparent insensibility to it. Margaret would have acted wisely in conciliating one whose family interest might have proved so valuable to her; but she recoiled from suiting her deportment to the taste of those whose manner seemed to demand it, and Lady de Clifford finally absented herself from the court altogether. Entirely alienated from the queen, and viewing the weak capacity of the king with contempt, opportunity alone was wanting to detach her entirely from the Lancastrian party.

When the Duke of York began to sound the inclinations of the English and Welsh nobles on the subject of his own claim to the crown, Lady de Clifford had no difficulty in bringing to her recollection that in past times her own family had supported the Mortimers. She gave the Duke to understand that she wished well to his cause, but pleaded her peculiar position for declining to take part in it openly. The young Earl had made up his mind to abide patiently by the letter of his father's arrangements; and although now beyond his natural majority, his influence was only increased to the amount of his having the privilege of dissenting in any important matter,—something like a joint agreement now becoming necessary between himself and his mother, to make the wheels of domestic management run smoothly; but he seldom made

use of this right. He was studious, and devoted his abundant leisure to the acquisition of knowledge, while a taste for music afforded a source of enjoyment to himself and others.

To the grace and refinement which made his society so pleasant, was united a marked decision of character; and this would have entirely delighted his mother, could she have carried him along with her in all matters, otherwise it might one day prove troublesome and inconvenient, for it was impossible to shut her eyes to the fact that, on some important points, his views differed materially from her own; and she had projects which could not now be easily carried into effect without his concurrence. She often introduced, in conversation, remarks on the political aspect of the times; but she could never gather from her son any encouragement to avow, publicly, her change of sentiments. Her own account of Queen Margaret had made as unfavourable an impression on his mind as she could wish, at an early period of his life; but now he had evidently deep sympathy for the unfortunate, coupled with disapprobation of the fearful sacrifice the Duke of York hesitated not to make for the attainment of the crown, embroiling the country and wasting its resources from end to end. These opinions were never obtruded, unless drawn forth; and the Countess was not without hope that when the nation should have settled down, and the York dynasty be securely established, her son would consent to come out in the new political complexion. She thought his objections were chiefly fostered by the old family leanings, and she resolved to use her address in endeavouring to disabuse his mind of them.

The younger De Clifford, though inferior in point of capacity to his brother, possessed a large share of his mother's affections, and she often consulted him, more with the view of invigorating his mind, than in the expectation of deriving from him any valuable counsel.

But, for some time back, Lady de Clifford had entertained suspicions concerning her eldest son, to the pain of which his mere political views were very secondary. Her attention had first been drawn towards this subject by the family confessor, who had whispered in the lady's ear his doubts of the Earl's orthodoxy. It was evident enough that the young man was slack in his devotions, according to their sense of the term; he was frequently missed from the chapel, and the Countess became seriously alarmed; for it were a grief and a reproach she had never contemplated that the heir of so venerable a house should become a Wycliffite—a despised lollard—a gospeller!

The shifting sands offer not a more formidable check to the ocean's waves, than the efforts of man to overturn the work which is divine; but often does he attempt the hopeless task; and many were the consultations held between the lady and Father Francis, about the means to be used for counteracting what they called the growing evil, while the mind of the Earl had been gradually opening to the light, and casting off the bonds of darkness.

Almost every establishment of the magnitude of Clifford Castle maintained a number of domestic church-officials. The chapel was a necessary appendage, and to the chapel a band of singers and other functionaries was indispensable; so that his absence from the stated devotions was immediately marked. In fact, his earliest doubts concerning the truth of the Romish creed were fostered in listening to the service performed in his own chapel, and in conning over such books of devotion as he possessed. Something of absurdity there seemed in many of the points he was required to believe. When these suggestions first arose, he tried to cast them out as temptations; he dreaded rather than encouraged them; they were unwelcome intruders, and he often closed his book, as if by so doing he could also close his mental vision, and would

seek to dispel his uncomfortable feelings by engaging in some active occupation.

It is not surprising that he was pained by the intrusion of perplexing doubts regarding the truth of that creed in which he had been so carefully educated, and beyond the pale of which he was told there was no salvation. Overburdened by his anxieties, he had at length hinted at the state of his mind in confession, and thus confirmed the fears and suspicions of Father Francis. He patiently went through a prescribed penance; but at its conclusion his doubts remained as obstinate as before, and he resolved to ask his confessor for a Bible. He was given to understand that as much of the Scriptures as was good and fit for the laity, the church gave in her services, and could yield no more, without endangering the souls of her children, who were, one and all, incapable of understanding them without her interpretation. This was a very unsatisfactory reply, and, unable to see any end to his perplexity, De Clifford resolved, if possible, to procure a copy of Dr. Wycliffe's English translation of the Scriptures. Copies were scarce; but he was not to be deterred by the difficulty, and at length he found himself in possession of one. His new treasure became the subject of deep study; and on comparing with its simple and holy doctrines, the worship of his church, he was led to shudder at the host of impure errors he had been taught to receive as truths, on authority quite as fallible as his own. He could no longer disguise his convictions so much as to countenance what he now considered a form of idolatry; yet, he had not wholly renounced his connection with the church, and he still hoped she had a renovating power in her own constitution, which would recover her from the depth into which, through the cunning craft of men, she had fallen.

At first he knew of no one to whom he could communicate his views, or from whom he could receive counsel.

In his case, this was perhaps an advantage; his naturally vigorous mind did not shrink from solitary investigation; he was the more led to seek for teaching whence he could best derive it; and, unmingled with human exposition, he drew his first solid principles from the fountain of truth itself. Some of the Reformer's writings were now added to his library, and he soon discovered that which made Wycliffe so obnoxious to the Romish hierarchy. It became whispered abroad that Lord de Clifford was turning a lollard; and it was made known to him that there were a few within his reach who could sympathize with his state of mind. There was a little band in his neighbourhood accustomed to meet together under silence of night, for the purposes of social worship; they were, for the most part, in a humble sphere of life, and would never have dreamed of making themselves known to one of his rank, had they not believed that the very knowledge of their existence might prove matter of encouragement to an individual treading his solitary way through a labyrinth, of which experience had taught them the difficulty. They judged right; for it was strengthening to ascertain that the articles he had in the solitude of his chamber rejected, were the same they also protested against; and that the system of truth he had gathered from the Bible, differed in no material point from that, for the confession of which, Lord Cobham and others had suffered martyrdom. De Clifford's change was not that valueless thing—a mere change of opinion; he felt he was a lost sinner, and was brought for pardon to the foot of the cross. There was an evident difference in his deportment, a meekness and forbearance which was not natural to him, and which, to observers, was an excellent commentary on the nature of his faith. The Countess was more deeply mortified than she could express, when the fact of her son's heresy could no longer be concealed—when it had arrived at such a

decisive point, that he told Father Francis he never would again confess to a sinful creature like himself, whose power to absolve him he utterly denied. The confessor was horror-struck; but the young man remained unmoved. The priest was extremely chagrined at the defection of his old pupil, and the whole convent in the neighbourhood was moved at the report. To lose a nobleman of his rank was annoying in itself, and his predecessors had been wont to confer weighty obligations on their community. Every effort was tried to lure De Clifford back to the faith of his fathers. At first the methods used were indirect: his well-known taste for the fine arts was laid under contribution. The band of singers at Clifford Castle was reinforced, and their music improved; while, under the direction of Father Francis, they aimed at professional perfection. Morning and evening their enchanting strains were echoed by the vaulted and fretted roof of the chapel, and found their way to the most distant parts of the building. All this De Clifford perfectly understood, yet his excessive love of music often prompted him to linger near, when the family choir chanted the vespers and matins. He soon learned, however, to investigate the nature of the feelings thus awakened, which bore a mark so like devotion; and he came to the conclusion that they were the mere product of sentimental gratification, bearing no stamp either of moral or religious principle. A new piece of sculpture of the best workmanship the age could produce was added to the number of images already adorning the chapel. Sculpture at this time made considerable advances in England; and the more the followers of Wycliffe inveighed against images, the more they became multiplied, and no cost nor pains were spared to make them secure the admiration and enlist the prejudices of the people. These passive measures proved quite ineffectual to induce the wanderer to return into the fold; nay, they rather led

him to make deeper inquiry into the nature of that church which required the extrinsic aid of such things as these. The Abbot of his monastery became impatient that the family priest brought him no better tidings of the noble heretic; and Father Francis had to bear accusations of his want of zeal or discernment in not discovering the means most likely to work effectually upon the mind of a young man he had himself educated, whose confessor he had been, and under the same roof with whom he had so long resided.

Father Francis was enjoined to extract from the Earl what his opinions really were, as it seemed hopeless to expect an unsolicited disclosure. He had not confessed for a long time, and the priest had ceased to expect it. He did not now appear at mass either, and, altogether, he seemed to be a very hopeless subject; but without an exact knowledge of how far he had strayed, it was not easy to decide on the best means for reclaiming him, and, urged by his superior, Father Francis solicited a private conference with Lord de Clifford, and chose for their place of meeting the castle chapel. The Earl consented, and they accordingly met there at an appointed time. It was the priest's duty to open the conference which was to be held at his own request. He went through some preliminary acts of devotion, crossed himself many times, and then turned a grave look on the Earl, who had laid before him a large volume, and was patiently waiting the confessor's leisure.

'My lord,' he said at last, 'it is very grievous to think that we are met here to talk in disputation of that which it is sin to doubt for a moment. It is long since I have seen cause to mourn over you as a strayed sheep, and I would fain use my poor efforts to bring you back to the fold of which the successor of blessed Peter is the shepherd; in this desire I am devoutly joined by the holy brethren of our monastery.'

'You must then excuse plainness of speech,' said De Clifford, 'for we are met to discuss too solemn a subject to admit of disguise. I wish to be respectful, but I must be honest. The difference between my belief and the doctrines you teach is very wide, and increases with every inquiry: I no longer own him whom you call the successor of St. Peter as my shepherd. I own no spiritual head but one, who is the true Shepherd and Bishop of souls,¹ and to His flock I belong, unworthy and sinful as I am.'

'Then you deny the Pope's authority!' apostrophized the priest.

'I do,' answered the Earl.

'And where did you find this ruinous doctrine, if I may be so bold as to inquire?' demanded Father Francis.

'That I have no hesitation in stating,' replied the young man, lifting the book which lay before him. 'I find it here, in Dr. Wycliffe's translation of the Holy Scriptures.' Father Francis looked wistfully at the book, but did not attempt to touch it; he longed to have it in his possession as a trophy, but that he knew he need not attempt. He was well aware of the determined character of its owner, and hopeless would be any means of turning him from the path he had chosen, save by convincing his judgment, a means he believed there was little chance of effectually employing in the present instance; a trial, however, he was bound to make.

'That is a very dangerous book, my lord,' he said; 'and you are not the first inexperienced youth it has led astray, since that forsworn priest Wycliffe sent it out to deceive and entrap unwary souls.'

'Pardon me,' said De Clifford, 'if I say that I think he left to England the best legacy she ever inherited.'

'As to that,' remarked Father Francis, 'your personal obligation cannot be very deep on this score. I flatter

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 25.

swered, laying his hand on the Bible. 'I am willing and desirous to receive the bread and wine; but in the idolatrous service of the mass I never will unite. The real presence, in this sacred rite, instituted as a memorial, I do not believe, and cannot confess. You refuse us the cup which a greater authority than you commanded believers to receive. A couple of centuries have scarcely elapsed since, in this country, the first attempt was made to deprive the laity of this privilege; and the imposition progressed, till the washings of the priest's fingers were offered to the poor deluded worshippers as a substitute.'¹

'You traduce us, my lord,' said the confessor, who was not prepared to find his old pupil so well informed on these matters, and who could not deny the truth of the allegation.

'Nay, you well know I speak the truth,' said the Earl. 'Some of your number may be ignorant, but you are not; and I owe you much for the diligence you bestowed on my instruction on all subjects, save this vital and important one which we are now discussing. For this I do not blame you, knowing the profession to which you belong; and the recollections of the past made me mourn over you with feelings of special sorrow.'

The priest bit his lips at this strange and doubtful compliment. 'In matters of faith, my lord,' he said, 'wiser men than either of us have bowed to the judgment of the church. Your illustrious ancestors were sound in the faith, and liberal benefactors to the church in which they lived and died; how would they feel could they now but learn the lamentable position in which the heir of their wealth and honours is standing? I wonder these very walls their piety erected, and the figures of those holy saints around us, are not moved by the scene they witness!'

¹ Note B.

'Their composure will, I am sure, remain proof against it,' said the Earl, with perfect calmness. 'I cannot now but wonder any rational man could fancy there is efficacy or devotion in addresses to these inanimate objects.'

'We do not pray to the saints; we only ask them to intercede for us, as we do good men,' observed the confessor.

'This is a mere gloss,' said the Earl, 'on which it is needless to waste words.'

'I came here with the intention of serious remonstrance, and in my anxiety for your best interests,' said Father Francis; 'but, my lord, you have in the very commencement of our debate expressed yourself so heretically as to show me that argument would be in vain; you are beyond it. I see the case is hopeless, and I know not what I shall report to the Abbot.'

'You may report to him just what I have told you,' said De Clifford resolutely. 'I have counted the cost, and shrink not from the avowal of my belief. The Scriptures tell me the fruit of the Spirit is, 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.'¹ Your church commands penance, pilgrimage, sprinkling, with a multitude of observances, not only weak, but sinful. Can that be a scriptural church whose tenets differ so materially from the word of life?'

'I grieve to tell you,' said Father Francis, 'that I see no prospect of your being delivered from the sentence of excommunication.'

'So be it,' said the Earl; 'they are pronounced blessed who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, and if I am honoured in being made one of the number, I shall be little concerned about such censures. This interview is none of my seeking; but ere we part, I must say to you, that I wish the scales of error and prejudice may yet fall

¹ Gal. v. 22, 23.

from your eyes, that you may see the delusion under which you are labouring.'

'Delusion!' repeated the priest, while his eyes flashed with indignant passion; 'then holy church, popes, councils, cardinals, and bishops, ever since the apostles, must have been wrong, to give countenance to the vile heresy got up by this trumpety lollard, whose very ashes could not rest in peace.'

'The Council of Constance,' said the Earl, 'signalized itself by the martyrdom of Huss and Jerome; their ashes have kindled a fire the Church of Rome cannot quench with all the waters of the Rhine. This notable Council of assembled wisdom, where three infallible heads contended for dominion, condemned these men, whose doctrines were in some points not far removed from their own; it was no wonder they should look with an eye of evil omen on Dr. Wycliffe, who was honoured by communicating to the Bohemian Reformers what light they had; his own burned clearer and brighter, and it matters not that his insensible remains were exposed to the exercise of a tyranny he could not feel; his ashes were scattered on the brook at Lutterworth; but they, and all such, shall be gathered with precision at the last day, and form the purified tabernacles of the spirits, who, having turned many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. But you, sir, know better than to believe that papal superstition existed ever since the days of the apostles; that might pass with me when I was your pupil, but I have now learned otherwise; and you are not ignorant that, one after another, abuses have crept in which disgrace your church. What resemblance, pray, have your prelates, and even your humbler clergy, to those apostles whose hands ministered to their necessities?'

'So you would reduce us to manual labour!' said the priest. 'This is one of the precious fruits of Wycliffe's teaching.'

‘Dr. Wycliffe has been misrepresented in this, as well as in other things,’ explained the Earl. ‘Although many of his books, that would have placed his character in the true light, have been destroyed, truth possesses a vitality in itself that is not easily extinguished, and that traduced and righteous man has not been so long dead, but something more modern than tradition remains to attest his integrity. But you misapprehended my meaning; the times we live in differ from the apostles’ days in so far that Christianity is outwardly established among us. I would see those who minister in holy things independent in their worldly circumstances, but not heaping up wealth, living in indolent luxury, and, by their practices, bringing a fearful reproach on the sacred name they bear; more and more emboldened in their sinful lives, because shielded by the strong arm of a law that grants them exemption from the punishment that would be visited on a lay offender.’

‘I cannot stay to listen to you, my Lord de Clifford,’ interrupted the priest; ‘you have taken the full measure of my patience.’

‘Suffer me, before we part,’ resumed the Earl, earnestly, ‘to explain that I have no wish to hurt your personal feelings; you have urged me to an open confession of my sentiments, and you have them. I fully and freely acquit you of adding to the list of those whose lives discredit their profession—my own knowledge assures me of this; but I cannot acquit you of consenting, by your continuance among those whom you know to be otherwise than holy men.’

‘So you would convert me!’ cried the priest. ‘That would be a mark to point at—Father Francis the heretic, —the ex-chaplain of Clifford Castle,—the convert of the young lord to whom he taught his alphabet! Really the enemy has sent a strong delusion into your lordship’s mind.’

‘As wonderful events have actually taken place in the

world,' said De Clifford; 'but do not fancy I think you so easily persuaded; I wish I could.'

Father Francis was evidently much excited, and seemed to be uneasy at breathing the same air with one so infected by what he considered pestilential doctrines,—the renouncer of the creed of his fathers. 'I think,' he observed, 'it is quite useless to prolong this conversation. I had intended saying many things to you, but my consternation at the depth into which you have fallen has almost sealed my lips. I mourn over your defection, and desire to see means used for bringing you back.'

'Indeed!' exclaimed De Clifford, who well knew the sort of means usually employed with such rebels as he, in the tender mercies of mother church. He fixed a keen and penetrating look on the countenance of his old confessor, which exhibited evident marks of agitation. 'Of what sort, pray, might these means be?'

'That is not for me to decide,' muttered the father; 'it belongs to higher jurisdiction than mine; but ways and means have been successfully used before to induce heretics to recant.'

'Yes,' said the young man, 'I know it. There are, and have been persons, who took up opinions in faith as mere matter of head knowledge, with whom there was no practical heart conversion; no wonder such should faint beneath the fiery trials you prepare. I should not in the least value a conversion which touched not the seat of man's sad depravity, nor expect from such any steadfastness in the hour of trial. I know not how it might be with me in such a case; I do not boast of any inherent strength; but grace can enable the weakest to stand in the evil day.'

There was silence for several minutes, during which time Father Francis seemed struggling to master his feelings, and De Clifford became affected. The priest then rose finally from his seat. 'I give you my parting

counsel,' he said solemnly: 'I believe Satan occupies a stronghold within you; I beseech you to seek counsel from the grail and missal, and till daylight on your bare knees to pray before that crucifix, and beg the intercession of those holy saints whose images the piety of your ancestors placed here, to try if that dark spirit can be driven forth.'

'I do believe your better feelings, and the remembrance of former times, have led you to put forth this advice,' said the Earl; 'as such, I thank you for it. But I need not apply for intercession to souls, who, if they be in heaven, are well aware that they were sinners saved by grace alone, and would abhor the sacrilege of taking any portion of that worship which is due only to Him through whom they were saved. But will you yet bear with me, when I say that you have canonized men whose lives would have disgraced the morality of pagans?'

The priest stood aghast, he looked at the Earl for a moment, and drawing his vestment around him, prepared to depart. 'I cannot touch you,' he said, 'who will soon be a branded, excommunicated man.'

It could hardly be said that Father Francis had used any argument, for in reality he was so confounded at the decisive tone and unexpected information of his opponent, that he made but a lame advocacy of a cause that, being itself untenable beneath the broad light of Bible truth, would have required sophistry deep and subtle to set it off to any advantage. Father Francis was a good scholar, and could have brought enough of such philosophy as Oxford then taught to his aid; but he lost his coolness at the beginning, and the Earl's observations called more for plainness of speech, than the logic of the schoolmen.

When De Clifford found himself alone he was considerably agitated. It was not that he entertained a doubt of the truths he had confessed; but it was not easy at the

first to brook the idea of being a marked individual—an alien from the faith of all his family. This feeling was however very temporary, and his chief fear was that he had exhibited too much of self, too much of that natural impetuosity from which he longed to be delivered. There were other reflections, too, that crowded thick upon his mind, as he took a rapid glance into the future. The time was not far distant when his name must become more prominently conspicuous. Should he incur political suspicion even, there was now evidence enough to satisfy him that it would be readily used as a handle to justify accusations against him, taking their rise from a far different source. Ways and means were to be devised for his return to the Romish Church, this had been hinted; doubtless the nature of them must be the result of circumstances. He fully believed that a return to the bondage from which he had been emancipated no human means could accomplish; he knew that the consequences of their failure would create a hostility that death alone could quench. The case of Lord Cobham very naturally occurred to him: he was the faithful servant and once the beloved friend of the monarch who finally gave him up to the fury of his persecutors. A Christian assembly was called a rebellious mob; Lord Cobham was accused, and condemned as their leader. His fall was surely a speaking comment on that text, 'Put not your trust in princes.' For his own part he had no right to look for protection: he was personally unknown in the courtly circles, and just about that time the Yorkists were beginning to carry all before them, while the side to which his family prejudices inclined him was all but crushed. Was he prepared then to stand fast? Not in his own strength: there was then the more need for diligently seeking it where alone it could be found. He did not literally follow the advice of his late confessor, yet he did

kneel in deep and fervent supplication, and was encouraged in knowing that access at the throne was not through the intervention of any less exalted than the High Priest of our profession, whose finished work neither requires nor admits of any aid from man. Restored to perfect calmness, he retired to his apartment, resolving humbly not to turn to the right hand nor to the left, from the plain path of duty.

Meantime Father Francis bent his steps to the monastery, to report to the Abbot the dire intelligence of his complete failure in convincing his old pupil on a single point. A long pause followed this intimation, during which time the superior seemed lost in thought. 'What can be done?' he said at length.

'Nothing, I think, for the present,' replied the priest.

'True, true, we must proceed with caution,' rejoined the Abbot; 'this is a case demanding it;' then, as if thinking aloud, 'The family is powerful; they endowed our monastery; the youth is misled and may recant;' he raised his voice and added, 'at all events the feelings of the lady mother must be consulted.'

'I sounded her on the subject this evening,' said Father Francis.

'Ah! how came that about?'

'Why, I met the Countess as I came from my conference with her son. She knew my errand, and was curious to hear the result. I told it to her.'

'And what said she?' asked the Abbot eagerly.

'She crossed herself most devoutly, and said this was even beyond what she had feared. I then threw in some hints of the possibility of the church's further investigation.'

'Ah! and how brooked she this?'

'She started, frowned, and after a little pause, said in a

peculiar tone I well understood, "Have a care, Father Francis; remember De Clifford is the head of a noble house—the barons of England have been aroused before now."

'Did she say so?' cried the Abbot; 'is she tinged too, think you?'

'No, no; forbid it—all the saints forbid it,' quickly replied the priest. 'But I will tell you, and I should know them well, that though they do not agree on all points, she is proud of this son of hers, and I am not quite sure, if it came to a question involving his personal safety, how she might act.'

'Well, well, caution is a good thing, and for the present we must act upon it,' said the Abbot. 'Saint Francis defend us from heresy, schism, and the barons!'

Father Francis was correct in his opinion that Lady de Clifford would have objected to any interference with her son on the part of the Abbot. She had not relinquished the hope that her own influence and good management might yet produce in him a desirable change; and in the meantime she resolved to keep her younger son as much as possible at Oxford, where she trusted there remained no vestige of the doctrines Wycliffe had so fearlessly taught in the heart of that University.

She believed that want of active employment had something to do with the strange perversion of the Earl's mind, for so she termed his new belief. Under this impression she bitterly regretted not having earlier devolved a much larger portion of the weight of his own concerns on his hands, and she tried to remedy this evil. She consulted him on various subjects, was much guided by his taste and judgment in planning improvements, and he, eager to gratify her in every possible way, willingly set aside his favourite pursuits to take part in hers.

The subjects on which they differed were rarely touched

upon, and the lady fondly hoped that her son would see the fallacy of his views, both religious and political.

It was during this time of comparative domestic harmony that an addition was made to the circle of their acquaintance, which gave a new bent to the views of the Countess, and soon contributed to increase her enmity to the doctrines of Wycliffe.

CHAPTER II.



FEW miles distant from Clifford Castle there stood an ancient building, called Pierrepont Manor. It was a complete seclusion; but the passing stranger might catch an occasional glimpse of the dwelling from among the trees in which it nestled. Its late possessor, Sir Edmund Pierrepont, had been an adherent of the house of Lancaster, and was early involved in the troubles of that civil war which lasted through so many dreary years. During his absence from home his wife had died, and returning to his family after the defeat of his party at St. Albans, the weight of private and public calamity so preyed upon him that he became depressed and ill.

His health sunk rapidly, and as he looked upon his children, a son and daughter, both too young to understand either their own danger or the cause of his anxiety, he dwelt mournfully on the dark prospects of the future. The little girl, who was the elder of the two, would often gaze at his melancholy countenance, and when he placed her on his knee and sat opposite to the vacant chair that used to be her mother's, their tears mingled together.

From these sad reveries Sir Edmund would often be startled by the boisterous mirth of his boy, as he tasked his infant strength to drag his father's sword along the floor. 'Poor Henry,' he would say, 'it is likely you will

have to wield that early enough to defend your own hearth.'

A rapid decline removed their father, and left Julia Pierrepont and her brother orphans. They had an ample fortune, and yet they seemed almost friendless, for in those times every family of note was involved in the national struggle, and little disposed to incur risk or suspicion for the sake of others.

The young Pierreponts were guiltless of party bias ; but it was well known that their father had espoused the side whose fortunes were now on the wane.

Sir Edmund had one kinsman, with whom he had not had much intercourse for many years. Their homes were distant from each other, but this did not prevent De la Pole from coming to assist in paying the last tribute of respect to his deceased relative ;—he little imagined what the result of his visit was to be. After the funeral the assembled relations took their leave, one by one, and to his utter surprise he found himself left alone with his little cousins. They seemed entirely deserted, and De la Pole's affectionate heart overflowed when he saw the two helpless children come into the room where he sat, and after casting a bashful glance at him, shrink into the deep recess of an oriel window. His gentle manners soon won their confidence, and they clung to him as if they had no other friend on earth.

He was perplexed how to act : he could not remain long there with them ; they must not be left to the sole care of domestics ; his own residence was scarcely a suitable abode for them ; years were coming thick upon him, and family bereavement had left him alone in his old age. Inclination and principle led him to stand apart from political faction, and, living in retirement, widely separated from courtly intrigues, his name was not associated with any party. His habits were simple, and his fortune not

large. It was evident that a place more compatible with the prospects of the Pierreponts might have easily been selected, had others felt a like interest in them. He found himself called upon to see the affairs of his late cousin arranged to the best advantage for his children, and during the time thus necessarily occupied, they had so entwined themselves about his heart that all doubts as to the path of duty vanished. When asked if they would go with him to his house at Ashley, they were overjoyed at the proposal. Of all their kindred, De la Pole alone was disposed to act a parent's part to them, and they were soon happily domesticated beneath his roof. This was an era in Julia's history destined to mould her future character. De la Pole was numbered among the followers of Wycliffe, and he deeply felt the sacredness of the task he had undertaken, in the education of his orphan charge.

The dispositions of the brother and sister were very opposite. Henry was gay and thoughtless, and as he grew up he loved the sports, the freedom, and the adventure of a mountain country. Julia, on the contrary, as her mind developed, became thoughtful and inquiring, and De la Pole delighted in communicating the information she eagerly sought.

But his chief study was his Bible, and he took much pains to store her mind with its holy precepts and history. She hung upon his instructions, and he prayed, and believed he saw cause to hope, that she had chosen the paths of righteousness and peace. Here she was training for the adverse times that lay before her, and in this calm retreat she lived until maturing judgment enabled her to sift carefully the grounds on which the English Reformer differed so widely from the creed generally received.

She learned to know that she might yet be called upon, by enemies, to give an account of the faith that was in her; and in order to be prepared for such a trial, it was

necessary to have an intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures. These studies prayerfully pursued, led to that change of heart which every sinner requires, and without which the soundest of creeds will avail nothing for salvation.

Her brother would listen, now and then, to her gentle admonitions; but they made no impression. Lollardism had no attractions for him, and his religion sat as lightly on him as on any young gentleman of his rank and age.

But the Pierreponts were again to be left unprotected in a way little anticipated.

Their conscientious guardian began to entertain an impression that he should not be long left to watch over them, and he became very anxious to secure the interest and friendship of some suitable protector.

Their nearest relative was not two days' journey from Ashley, yet no inquiry had been made after them, and no desire shown to cultivate their acquaintance. De la Pole was somewhat annoyed; but he thought suspicions of himself and his opinions might have tended to keep Sir George Villiers at a distance. It became his duty, then, to make the first advance; for although he coveted not worldly society for his precious charge, he felt it to be proper that they should receive some countenance, and that the responsibility of Henry's affairs should not be left so entirely on his hands.

With such views he left home to visit Sir George Villiers, promising to return at a stated time. The evening that was to bring him back was anxiously longed for, and as the shadows of night closed in without his appearing, great uneasiness prevailed at Ashley. Julia watched every object while daylight lingered, and listened to every sound after the light had departed.

Henry tried to persuade her that their cousin had been induced to remain another night; but his own heart trembled with apprehension. Unable longer to disguise the

feelings he thought it manly to conceal, he said he would take a turn along the road, and hoped they should come back together. But he was long absent, the hour grew late, and Julia was sick at heart with indescribable bodings.

The fears of Deborah, the old housekeeper, brought her to Julia's apartment to mingle her conjectures with hers. Voices from below interrupted their melancholy colloquy, and Julia, rushing past, was at the foot of the staircase in a moment. Henry was there, but he did not perceive her, and she heard him saying, in a voice half choked with sobbing, 'Make less noise, and walk more softly; you will alarm my sister.'

Her worst fears seemed confirmed—she was unable to ask a single question, and, clasping her brother round the neck, she gave the natural expression of undefined dread in one or two incoherent exclamations. But the boy was too much overcome to speak to her; and she would have gone into the midst of the mysterious group which were mournfully entering the house, had not Henry, mustering all his courage for the effort, drawn her back, saying, 'You must not look upon him—he is gone!' and taking her hand they walked up-stairs, followed by bearers carrying the remains of their beloved and honoured friend.

The object of De la Pole's journey has been already stated. He had been grievously disappointed in the result of his mission. He knew nothing himself of cold calculating policy, and he was chagrined to find his proposals for the advantages of his ward met by no corresponding warmth. He represented the propriety of Henry's being recognised by his friends; he was approaching an age when it became necessary he should be so, as the representative of his family, and he said that the entire charge of his affairs was a weight he could no longer undertake to bear, unaided by those whose relationship gave them a title to advise and act.

Sir George politely observed that no person could possibly doubt Mr. De la Pole's peculiar capability for such a management, and that having undertaken it so early, and carried it on so long, he was evidently the fittest person to retain it until the boy should be able to take his business into his own hands. De la Pole rather indignantly reverted to the helpless condition from which it was his pleasure and privilege to rescue the children, when not one but himself seemed willing to do so; and for the remainder of his stay, which he made as short as possible, he studiously avoided the subject.

As De la Pole again drew near his own house, the situation and prospects of his young friends so engrossed the good man, that he suffered the bridle to lie loose upon his horse's neck, and fell into a train of reflection. He had proceeded in this way for some time, till the horse, starting at some object, made a sudden spring to one side, and his rider fell to the ground.

Poor Henry was the first to discover the catastrophe, for De la Pole had chosen to travel alone. The boy stooped down and laid his trembling hand on him, but alas! he was stiff and cold. For a time Henry was transfixed to the spot. The first thing that aroused him was the recollection of his sister; he ran to the nearest cottage to give the alarm, and a group was quickly collected to the fatal spot, where lay the lifeless body of him who had lived among them only to do them good. Their comments were his panegyric.

'He was the kindest master,' said one.

'We shall never see his like,' remarked another.

'Ah, you know not half the good he did,' cried an old man who had known him from his youth, and had been in his service for thirty years.

'He will sleep sound,' said another; 'he never distressed a poor man.'

'Ah, he is in a happy land now,' observed the old man.

'Is it not wonderful to see the like happen to such as he?' remarked another.

'No,' rejoined the old servant; 'it is sometimes a mark of favour when those who are prepared are taken away in a moment from this weary world. It is surely no loss to them to go up to their Father's glorious house. Oh! my friends, how much pains did he take to bring you all out of your heathenish way; think you he needed a priest to shrive him? No, no, he had a better pleader. Dear young master, I hope you will never forget him, or his righteous ways.'

The funeral of Reginald De la Pole was a truly mournful procession; he had been a general benefactor where he dwelt, and to the little band of Christians with whom he was united, his countenance had been no small encouragement.

Henry Pierrepont and his sister were now to return to their paternal residence. Julia was strongly attached to the place where so many happy years had been spent, where she had learned to love that word of life which would be her solace throughout her future career, and which would now be her counsellor when removed from those on whom she was wont to rely. But a stranger was to take possession of Ashley, and this was a sight she could not bear to see; it reconciled her to hasten her departure. Deborah declared that she would never part with them, and Julia felt her presence a sort of protection. She was a faithful creature, and it would be pleasant to comfort her declining years. But how was Julia, the pet lamb of his flock, to part with the venerable pastor at Ashley, and her simple-minded Christian friends? This was indeed a trial. She was laden with prayers and counsels, and encouraged in the idea that she might be going as a missionary to her native locality; but she was warned to walk with caution, as danger abounded.

From their slender stock of theology she was gifted with a few treasures, and the minister's parting words were, 'Dear child, we shall remember you in our prayers.'

Pierrepoint Manor was to Henry and his sister like a new world. It was a much more splendid residence than Ashley; but, alas! it lacked the presence of Ashley's beloved master; and who would direct the boy, not yet fifteen, how to act in his new sphere? He often came to his sister in perplexity; the strength and maturity of her judgment exceeded her years, and necessity taught her premature experience, which was of service to both. But she pined after the Christian privileges to which she had been so long accustomed; except Deborah, there was not another declared Wycliffite in the whole household, and in the neighbourhood she heard of none.

Lady de Clifford had heard that the children of the late Sir Edmund Pierrepoint had taken up their residence at the family mansion, but she was in no hurry to make their acquaintance. Now and then, if their names were casually introduced, propriety did suggest that she might have taken some notice of her young neighbours; but her mind was so continually revolving on two subjects—her son's heresy and the political position of her family—that she could scarcely admit another idea; and after many months had gone by, Pierrepoint Manor still remained unvisited. The Earl little imagined, as during his rides he observed the curling smoke rise from amidst the thick grove around the Manor, that another traveller in the way 'everywhere spoken against' dwelt there. He had often blamed himself for not offering some civility to young Pierrepoint; but he had delayed till it appeared too late. A simple adventure at length led to their introduction to each other. De Clifford was in the habit of indulging in long solitary walks; and in the course of one of these rambles he was overtaken in a thunderstorm, close to the gate of Pierre-

point Manor. It happened that Henry was exposed to the same; and hastening home in a torrent of rain, he came up to the Earl just at the entrance. They were personally unknown to each other, and the traveller was hurrying past to reach some other shelter. Henry's hospitality was too genuine to allow him to care much who the object of it might be in such an hour, and accosting the Earl with his peculiar frankness, he offered an asylum until the weather should clear up. De Clifford at first declined, for he felt that it would be an awkward manner in which to make his first appearance at a house, with the master of which courtesy should have long ago made him acquainted. His objections, however, were overruled by Henry's introducing himself; and making himself known in return, they entered the Manor together.

The Earl was greatly pleased with his host, and resolved to cultivate his acquaintance. Young Pierrepont was not old enough nor staid enough to suit him as a companion; but he was an engaging boy, and free from the cold and formal manners of the world. De Clifford had not seen Julia, nor had anything arisen to awaken his curiosity concerning her; but he thought he could not do less, in return for her brother's kindness, than induce his mother to call upon her. As the proposal emanated from her son, Lady de Clifford offered no objection. She was rather glad that anything could attract his attention that might tend to have what she would consider a salutary effect on his mind, for she was beginning to dread his turning too much of a recluse. She accordingly accompanied her son to Pierrepont Manor, and in due time the visit was returned. The Countess imagined that she never saw Howard so desirous, apparently, to make himself agreeable to strangers; she had indeed often regretted his reserve; he seemed to her to be struck by the appearance of the fair stranger, and she was resolved to draw

him out on the subject. Shortly after their first visit, she remarked to him that Pierrepont seemed a fine promising youth, and the Earl concurred.

‘There is a great contrast between him and his sister,’ she observed.

‘Yes, they appear very different,’ he responded.

‘She has not his brilliancy of character I should fancy,’ said the Countess, with a glance at her son.

‘Brilliancy!’ he repeated, a little surprised; ‘no, I should think not, in the way I suppose you to mean.’

‘It is a pity she is his senior,’ she insinuated.

‘Why?’ asked her son, smiling.

‘Because at his age, and isolated as they are, she may acquire an influence disadvantageous to him,’ explained the Countess. ‘You know energetic characters are what we want in the country, and she seems a shy and timid girl.’

‘Perhaps she may have more energy than her manner indicates,’ said De Clifford; ‘but the difference in point of age will soon lose its balance. He will very soon be old enough to judge for himself, and I should fancy he is not very easily led; he seems to me a youth that would like his own way quite as well as that of any one else.’

The Countess was not mistaken in her idea that Julia Pierrepont had made an impression on her son. It was not quite what she would have desired, for she had formed a scheme of enlarging her political influence by his being united to a family high in favour with the house of York. The young lady whom she had selected for her future daughter was not exactly such as she herself could have wished; but the connection was desirable, and she lost no opportunity of representing her to the Earl in as fair colours as she could. Now another hope rose before her. The Lady Elizabeth, it was plain, had no chance of acquiring any influence over De Clifford’s mind,—Julia Pierre-

point might. In that case, here was the surest means that had yet appeared to wean him from his heretical opinions; for it could not be doubted that she would use her every endeavour for that purpose, should they ever be united, so the Countess determined to cultivate an intimacy. She was little conversant with the principles on which her son acted. Julia had seemed to him a personification of one he could wish to be his companion for life, were the mental endowments in unison with the exterior; but with a member of that church he had quitted for ever he could form no sacred tie. No doubt arose as to the nature of her creed, and therefore she could never be anything to him, but as a sweet vision that had once crossed the rugged path of his existence. Uncertain whether to look back with pain or pleasure to his acquaintanceship at the Manor, it was a long time before he paid another visit there.

The next time he did go, a discovery awaited him he had little anticipated. Being alone for a short time before his host came in, he took up a book he saw lying on the table, when, to his great surprise, he found it to be a treatise of Dr. Wycliffe's. On the title-page was written 'Julia Pierrepoint,' with some words of fatherly counsel, and an English text. It was the gift of John Beverly, the venerable pastor of the little flock at Ashley. De Clifford was deeply engaged with the book when Henry entered. These were not times to be very anxious about a display of that faith which, ever and anon, called its professors to martyrdom. Pierrepoint had no idea yet that his new acquaintance was a follower of Wycliffe, and having no desire himself to be ranked among that number, he felt uncomfortable when he observed how he had been occupied. He apologised for his absence, and expressed regret that the Earl had not met with anything more amusing than the book he had found him perusing. Lord de

Clifford said he had been very agreeably entertained; but Henry imagined these were mere words of course, and, anxious to disclaim any knowledge of the poor tractation, he said that for his own part he had never looked into the book, but supposed it was something his sister had carried from Ashley, as she was rather curious in such matters.

De Clifford noticed the awkwardness of the youth on this interesting but dangerous topic, and deemed it best to abstain from further remark on the subject at that time, although his mind was filled with conjectures. Was, then, the sister of his new friend a Wycliffite?—it was at least evident that her brother was not. How could she have learned these reprobated doctrines? To what extent did they exist at Ashley? These were questions he longed to have answered; but he must wait a future opportunity for their solution.

Henry was much annoyed at his sister's religious belief. While in the north, it seemed of little consequence; but he imagined that it might in some way be inconvenient now. The habits he had himself acquired at Ashley had nevertheless some influence over him, and he was disinclined to admit the continual presence of a domestic priest, with a troop of followers.

The neighbouring convent provided him with a confessor. He was a man of mild manners and cultivated taste. Julia enlarged her stock of knowledge by conversation with him. To a less steadfast, or rather a less humble, and less watchful person, this might have proved a dangerous exercise; for the confessor made his talents and acquirements all subserve the cause he believed the righteous one. Julia came to fear that she was treading upon dangerous ground; the confessor's main object shone through the suavity of his outward deportment, and Julia began to shrink from indulging her curiosity on general subjects at the unwarranted risk of opening her mind to the influence of sophistical

reasonings. But the priest continued to seek opportunities of conversation with her, and seemed bent on drawing forth her views and opinions at large. Julia pursued the safest course, exposed as she was to well-studied arguments. She searched the Scriptures more diligently than ever, and thence she drew her weapons of defence. It was strange the priest made no curious inquiries into her possession of them; but whatever he thought of the fair heretic, no one beyond the bounds of Pierpoint Manor ever heard her name mentioned by Father Swinderby.

Julia felt painfully the want of Christian intercourse; but she had not voluntarily placed herself in her present position; and Christians are not providentially brought into circumstances where they will feel themselves deserted, if they do not hew out broken cisterns, and forsake the fountain. Her brother had mentioned to her with evident vexation, that Lord de Clifford had observed a book of hers, which she had left lying about, and added, that if she must have such in her possession, he wished she would keep them to herself, as he really did not desire to be set down for a lollard. Julia faintly smiled, as she replied that she did not think he was much in danger of such an accusation; but neither of them guessed the deep interest the apparent trivial circumstance had awakened in the mind of the visitor.

The Earl wished for an opportunity of some conversation with Julia Pierpoint; but in the ordinary course of events there seemed little prospect of it. He seldom saw her when he came, and if he did, there was no room for any save general remarks, as she was very reserved, and Henry usually engrossed the conversation. After many disappointments, he one day found her seated at her work in the room into which he was ushered. Henry was with her; but De Clifford was resolved he should make an attempt to gain the wished-for information. He contrived

to introduce the subject in an indirect way, by asking Julia if she regretted leaving the north, where she had so long resided; at the same time touching on the difference of the scenery from that now around her. She had not the most distant idea that so much was implied in this simple question; but Ashley, and the many sources of interest it contained, being thus vividly brought before her, it was with emotion she answered, that it had indeed been a wrench to quit a place to which she must ever look back with the warmest sentiments of gratitude. De Clifford observed that it was quite natural, and that the society—laying an emphasis on the word—to which we had early been accustomed, was not easily replaced by new acquaintances.

‘No,’ said Julia, with an expression which conveyed how very congenial this remark was to her; ‘that is certainly the most important association the mind has to rest upon, and gives itself a colour to the scenery, which does not soon fade.’

‘Julia,’ said her brother gaily, ‘I admit that to be a very pretty sentiment; but I am not to have my native land here disparaged. I am sure we do not want for natural beauty, and as to the people, I like them very well, as I hope they do me. I give a kind thought to Ashley; but I cannot afford to lose my enjoyments where I am likely to spend my life, by fancying I have left the happiest of my hours buried in the north.’

‘I should be sorry you did,’ said his sister gently. ‘I hope you will find much pleasure, when you have so large a field for usefulness.’

‘That is the true secret of happiness,’ remarked De Clifford; ‘a person who is of no use to his fellow-creatures, cannot know much of true enjoyment. Your brother will have much here to engage his attention, and many whose welfare in a great measure depends upon

him; and I am sure he will find his reward in endeavouring to promote their good. I confess I am one of those innovators who rejoice in the prospect of seeing the lords and their vassals placed on a different footing to that on which they have so long been; I trust a brighter time is dawning, and that men will soon see that their villains are also men—immortal beings.'

These were not such sentiments as Julia would have expected to hear from the lord of the frowning battlements of Clifford Castle. She looked on him with new interest as she said, 'Henry has been accustomed to see everything regulated on a plan which recognised such principles, and I trust he will recollect Ashley, in this particular, as well as his lamented kinsman.'

'I presume, then,' insinuated De Clifford, 'that Mr. De la Pole studied the best interests of his people.'

'He did, most devotedly,' she said.

'Lord de Clifford will not, however, agree throughout with you,' observed Henry; 'although our cousin was a good and kind man, he had some strange notions.'

'Indeed!' remarked De Clifford with interest; 'do you allude to anything of which a stranger may ask the nature?' The Earl put this question, because he was well aware that the terms applied by Henry, were commonly used to denote the favourers of 'Wycliffe's learning.'

'Why,' said Henry, 'De la Pole must stand greatly excused: he lived in a remote part of the country, saw little company, and seldom went from home. There are a number of persons in that district who hold religious opinions not to be approved of; but he, from his mode of life, was on friendly terms with them, and in short, he was little removed from being a lollard; but nevertheless, I assure you he was a good excellent man.'

'His tenets need no apology,' said Julia feelingly; 'he was a good man because he loved and believed the truth.'

'And the truth made him free,' added De Clifford expressively, but in an undertone. Henry did not catch the remark, nor would he have understood its point; but it conveyed to his sister an assurance that she spoke to one who had a knowledge of the Scriptures, and she replied,—
'It did so truly.'

De Clifford did not press the subject further; he had heard enough whereon to build a very pleasing speculation. He determined, when a fitting time should arrive, to enter upon the subject of separation from the Church of Rome; not a mere outward separation, but such as had its rise in the purest and holiest motives,—the love of that truth which was dearer than life. How this conversation was brought about, need not be related; but it was not very long before he avowed himself in Julia's hearing one of the Christian band commonly designated lollard by way of reproach, while he learned in return that she, too, was a Wycliffite.

This was a circumstance that could not long be concealed from the Countess; and it had the effect of putting an end to her newly-formed scheme. In her anxiety to see her son return to the faith of his fathers, she was willing to make any sacrifice; and could she but believe that Julia Pierrepoint was destined to obtain sufficient influence over his mind to accomplish this end, the ducal connection should never again have been thought of, and Julia would be the daughter of her choice. But when she became aware of her being a Wycliffite, no terms could express the horror she felt at having in any degree cultivated her friendship. Julia had never deceived her, though she did not volunteer a confession of her faith, but Lady de Clifford contracted a dislike to her that was manifest.

In days when the professors of a persecuted faith were few, sameness of belief drew closely together persons who otherwise might have all their lives passed each other unnoticed. It was no wonder, then, that those whose

tastes and sympathies would in ordinary times have pointed them out as companions, should wish to share together the joys and sorrows of the wilderness way, and to seek in each other's society that communion of heart that the world cannot understand.

The Earl felt deeply his mother's entire neglect of the Pierreponts, and Henry ceased to exchange visits with himself. No remark was made on this unpleasant change by either party; Julia knew that her heresy must mark her out as an object of reproach. Lady de Clifford only hastened the conclusion she strove to prevent. Some time had yet to elapse before her son should be legally entitled to the entire control of his own affairs; therefore, if he could have enjoyed the society of one he so greatly esteemed in the mutual intercourse that had so happily begun between the families, he would not have spoken of an event which, although placed at a distance, he looked forward to as deeply concerning the happiness of his future life. He now felt himself awkwardly and disagreeably placed. Julia Pierrepont was the object of his choice,—calculated, he believed, to comfort and cheer him through the vicissitudes of this world, to aid and encourage him in his journey towards another. They now seldom met, for she had suffered him on different occasions of late to return from a visit to the Manor without having seen her. He was resolved to put an end to his own suspense, by declaring his attachment. Julia was too upright and too unsophisticated to deny that her feelings were reciprocal; but she shrank from the idea of being an intruder on a family circle where she knew her presence was not desired. Her scruples were not unappreciated, and De Clifford would not ask her to assume his name until he could place her in the station he wished to see her occupy; so that mutual explanations having cleared present difficulties, she consented to link her destiny with

his, if ever it should please the Master she desired to serve in all things to make the path of duty plain.

Tales invented for mere amusement, to excite the feelings, and portray the manners of the world, are usually made up of such scenes as recommend them to the taste of those for whom they are intended; and on the often-quoted adage, 'The course of true love never did run smooth,' are built a variety of adventures, hopes, and disappointments, having their rise in human passions uncontrolled by any fixed principle, and their termination in the complete felicity or utter misery of the parties on whose behalf our sympathy is required. But these pages have no such object; therefore the delineation of an attachment formed between the two individuals whose annals will form the principal part of this narrative, has been rapidly sketched, that we may follow them in their future career with reference to the tie which thus united them. There are excellent individuals who would exclude from religious narrative whatever relates to those feelings that lead to an union of hearts such as this; but if truthful views of life are to be given, men and women must be exhibited in all its varied relations. It is sweet to contemplate the effects of Christianity on all the 'lights and shadows of existence.' True religion elevates and purifies the affections, and subordinates all things to its control; but it does not otherwise change the course of human affairs.

CHAPTER III.

F AINT as were Lady de Clifford's hopes now of seeing her son renounce his heretical views, she did not despair of yet enlisting him in the York interest; and, trusting to her own ingenuity for effecting this object which she had so much at heart, she kept a steady eye on the progress of public events. They seemed to second her wishes, for it became evident that no courage or effort could now effectually prop the falling cause of the house of Lancaster.

Hitherto her plans had been most provokingly frustrated; she therefore resolved to pursue a new course, and boldly to urge forward a crisis that few would have chosen deliberately to risk; but for the twofold object she hoped to advance, what was it she would not risk?

To attach her son to the court of Edward the Fourth was, in her eyes, of deep importance, and if once fairly embarked on the great political tide, she believed his own judgment would convince him how unsuitable the profession of a gosseller was to the place he should then undoubtedly occupy. She knew not what it was to be fast on the 'Rock of Ages.'

Freed from the fear of rivalry by the successes of his arms, King Edward began to conciliate; his condescending affability made this an easy task, while, under a fascinating and dazzling exterior, he was able to hide, in some

measure, the darker shades of his character. He resolved to make a partial progress through a part of the kingdom, and it came to Lady de Clifford's knowledge that his route was likely to lie within a convenient distance of Clifford Castle. Here was an opportunity not to be lost. Were the Earl to entertain his sovereign, he would thereby identify himself with his cause, and so far her point would be gained. The Earl of Warwick was her kinsman; she resolved on placing in his hands an invitation for the king to pause a night on his journey, and partake of such 'poor hospitality' as her house could offer. Under this mock show of humility she determined to make such a display as would convince him that the De Cliffords were adherents of no ordinary importance; but she gave her son no hint of her project. Once she had committed herself and him, objections would be all in vain, and opposition too hopeless to be attempted; so she argued, and so she acted. But a letter arrived signifying the monarch's gracious acceptance of her offered entertainment. Only a fortnight's time had to elapse; necessary preparations must be commenced without delay, and, armed with the irresistible statement that there was no possibility of evading this masterly stroke, she went to make the disclosure to her son.

Far from his thoughts was so extraordinary an event. As she entered the room where he stood apparently ready to go out, he was placing some half-written music in a cabinet, and did not observe his mother. It was a trifling circumstance, yet it ruffled the lady's brow; she stood close beside him before he perceived her. Instantly pulling off his cap, he bowed, and playfully saluted her with, 'Noble lady, your very humble servant.' His good-humoured address dispelled the gathering cloud, and she replied in the same strain, 'My lord, you do me honour.'

'I suppose you are going to ride?' she added, in her ordinary manner.

'It was my intention,' he answered. 'Has your ladyship any commands for me?'

The Countess's temper sometimes overcame her policy; and it was with no small astonishment he heard her repeat the word, 'Commands!—ay, there was a time.'

'A time!' he repeated in amazement; 'surely, my dear mother, you always find me ready to execute your commands when you so far honour me as to appoint me commissioner, and when—'

'They entirely coincide with your own wishes and opinions,' said the Countess, finishing the sentence in her own way.

De Clifford was perplexed and annoyed; but he had long been striving against the evil of a naturally hasty temper: a rising emotion of anger reminded him of his besetting sin, and warned him to be silent.

The Countess quickly repented her remark, for she had fallen upon a bad introduction to her subject. She looked out at the window and observed, 'It begins to rain, Howard; I think you had better order your horses up again, unless you desire a wet doublet.'

'There are many things more vexatious than a wet doublet,' said the young man, giving way for a moment to the temptation which assailed him. He had scarcely uttered the sentence when he regretted it, and was ashamed of being so easily overcome. Resolved he should not suffer himself to act the part of a wayward boy, the excitement produced by his mother's address was entirely absorbed in regret for his own sharpness, and, sitting down, he said he would take her advice, and remain at home; but he had no idea of the trying conversation that awaited him, nor of the test he had to endure.

'I am glad you have no present engagement, Howard,

observed Lady de Clifford, 'as I have an important communication to make. I understand that our young king is to make a progress in this direction;—have you heard anything of it?'

'I have not,' replied his lordship, coldly.

'It is quite true, nevertheless,' resumed the lady; 'and I think he judges wisely to make himself intimately acquainted with his barons in their own homes. It is wise; and the king is singularly gifted with affability, a quality that serves to win many hearts.'

'It must be mingled with principle effectually to bind them,' said the Earl.

'He is a person very likely to establish himself in the affections of his people,' said the Countess, who, notwithstanding her violence, had at times the convenient faculty of turning a deaf ear to any remark when she had a purpose to accomplish by it. 'He is so very fascinating,—I am sure you must agree with me on this subject at least, Howard.'

'I am sure you are already aware of the light in which I regard his character,' was her son's reply.

'Character!' repeated the lady; 'Oh! I was not talking of his character.'

'But you will allow,' said the young man, 'it is important to any man, be his rank what it may.'

'I know of nothing he has yet done very much to be condemned,' pleaded the lady.

'It surprises me to hear you say so; surely this is not like your usual penetration, my dear mother.'

'Penetration is employed by persons in various ways,' cried the Countess.

'Not to mention his unjust and cruel condemnation of poor Walker,'¹ observed her son, 'I would just call to your remembrance how the unfortunate deposed king has been treated—bound to his horse like a felon.'

¹ Note C.

‘That was the doing of Sir James Harrington,’ said the Countess.

‘And would he have taken it upon him so to act without the expected approbation of his sovereign?’ asked her son. ‘It is not to be supposed; and Edward has shown by his acceptance of that piece of service what share he had in its encouragement.’

‘Henry is a mere monk,’ said the Countess; ‘and I thought, Howard, you affected to depreciate the best and wisest of such characters.’

‘I deny not his unfitness to sway the English sceptre,’ he rejoined; ‘but I question if matters will be better managed under the new administration.’

‘They cannot be worse, at least,’ she observed; ‘and I own I have no doubts in my own mind about the superiority of the claim put forth by the house of York.’

‘And yet,’ said the Earl, ‘it is a claim that would never have been thought of, but for Henry’s incapacity and the queen’s mismanagement. There was, to say the least, one good trait in King Henry’s character,—he did his utmost to introduce a more moral feeling into the country; and as far as I can learn, his successor is likely to subvert the little that remains.’

‘You are too severe in your strictures, Howard,’ said his mother.

‘I fear they are but too well founded,’ he observed.

‘Your opinions seem strong enough,’ remarked the lady; ‘and yet you sat here very quietly, when friends were wanted on both sides.’

‘My single arm would be of small service, and my limited powers have hitherto supplied me with little more,’ said the young man. ‘I do not pretend to say, however, that such was my reason for the passive part I have acted. Had either party been entirely to my mind, I should have

lent my poor aid; and for my father's sake, perhaps, I might have had a few followers.'

'You would not then stay here peacefully if you had a motive for action. Do I understand aright that you would from choice carry arms?'

'No,' he replied; 'I never desire to see bloodshed for the sake of promoting ambitious views, nor for the applause of men; but there might arise circumstances that would induce me to take the field.'

'You will at least allow,' said the Countess, 'that the court of King Edward will be a more agreeable resort than we have had for many years; and to say truth, Howard, although circumstances may have justified your family in sanctioning the claims of the fourth Henry, you, I am sure, cannot approve the manner of his obtaining the throne. If usurpation be a crime, surely he was eminently guilty.'

'I admit it,' answered the Earl. 'I am not inclined to advocate the foundation of the Lancastrian claim; but on the same grounds, I must now condemn the Yorkists. Nothing but the most towering ambition could have led them again to sacrifice the country's peace as they have done; and the way in which they have already acted gives but a dark omen of the future. Queen Margaret is heavily laden with the blame of this disastrous revolution, which was originated through the unpopularity of herself and her counsellors; but her misfortunes claim our compassion, and I must say, that her heroic constancy deserves admiration. This is scarcely the time to dwell on her errors; she is at this moment a wandering fugitive with her boy, while the unhappy representative of the house of Lancaster languishes in confinement, and in all probability awaits a cruel and ignoble end.'

'You cannot think our young monarch capable of acting in the way you would insinuate,' she observed.

‘He has shown himself not over-scrupulous in the attainment of his ends,’ said the Earl. ‘It has been very painful to me that I may be accused of lying in wait to join whatever party may be ultimately successful; and rather than incur this reproach, I would, before now, have made an open declaration of my sentiments, could I have conscientiously come forward. I scarcely think my steed Agincourt would have carried me into the field to oppose the son and grandson of Henry the Fifth. He too, like his descendants, had his faults, but Edward the Fourth is not the man to induce me to desert the colours in defence of which my fathers bled.’

The Countess did not find the conversation taking a favourable turn, and she thought it best to come more directly to the point. ‘You would not think so harshly of King Edward did you know him better,’ she remarked.

‘There is no probability of our closer acquaintance for the present,’ observed her son.

‘I think you are quite wrong, Howard,’ she said. ‘It will never do for you to dream away your life here. It is more than time you took a part suited to your station and age. Your father, in his partiality, left to me a charge I cannot, consequently, relinquish; but you leave too much of the burden upon my hands, and a little more time will find you the sole guardian of that family dignity I have done all in my power to uphold. Your house, it is true, has long been attached to the Lancastrian claim; but you are not to sacrifice your interest to a whim, Howard. An occasion now offers of conciliation and peace, which may never again occur. The king passes, shortly, near Clifford Castle; I wish to see him your guest.’ Astonishment kept the Earl silent, and she proceeded: ‘Your entertainment of him here will give a colour to your politics at a very easy rate.’

‘Are you really serious?’ asked her son.

'Perfectly so,' she answered; 'and in a very important matter for your future welfare, I could not be otherwise.'

'But surely,' he objected, 'you have not considered that a step like this would commit me irrevocably to a cause I approve not; and while the storm is yet unsubdued that this contest has aroused, and the nearly deserted family of Lancaster are still breathing English air, it would be indeed unseemly in me to make my first public demonstration a funeral feast over the cause that has been supported by my house for more than sixty years. Prince Edward lives, and is in trouble. I cannot, will not, thus desert the cause of the distressed, to swell the triumph of the conqueror.'

'These ideas savour too strongly of romance, Howard,' said his mother; 'you know that any scheme to revive his sinking fortunes is now utterly impracticable. You surprise me more than I can express, for I had formed a higher estimate of your judgment, and in the belief that you could not reasonably make objections, I have taken a step I cannot now retract. If you would only give your mind fair play, you have more sense than carry out into practice the sentiments to which you have just given utterance. I hold in my hand a letter from my kinsman the Earl of Warwick, by which I am informed that his Majesty will condescend to honour Clifford Castle with his presence in the course of a fortnight from this day.'

'He begins by being liberal of his favours,' said the Earl; 'or are we indebted to my Lord of Warwick for this patronage?'

'Howard,' said his mother in a decided tone, 'you seem in a very perverse humour; but I shall keep no further reserve with you. I solicited the visit you imagine to be a voluntary offer, and I hope to see you do the honours of your father's house to your sovereign.' There was a pause, but at length the Earl with an effort said,—

'The honour of my father's house I hope I shall ever maintain; but I should esteem that honour sullied by offering the incense of flattery by lip and action where my heart refuses homage.'

'You are absurdly guided by prejudice, Howard,' said his mother; 'and it will lead you to your ruin.'

'My motives merit a better name than prejudice,' said the Earl calmly.

'Am I to understand that you think to throw any obstacle in the way of the royal visit?' she inquired.

'I see no power left in my hands to enable me to do so,' he answered, 'and I grieve to find myself so often forced into a position hostile to your wishes. On this important point I could have desired to be saved the pain, for many reasons; but if Edward comes here at this time, he must be entertained by those who have invited him.'

'You cannot be so headlong as you would have me to believe,' said his mother; 'but I hope I can manage to entertain even royalty without your sapient counsel, my lord.'

'There is yet left with me a choice; I shall leave the Castle,' he said.

'And pray, where may your lordship be pleased to go?' asked the lady, indignantly.

'Whatever I may do, I shall not bind myself to the Yorkist's chariot wheels—a valueless and despised time-server!' he said.

'All this pride seems mighty fine,' said the Countess; 'but depend upon it, you will rue it.'

'My dear mother,' said the Earl, solemnly, 'I am in sober earnest; I beseech you to be the same. Is it possible that you have placed me in this awkward dilemma, or did you only intend to sound my opinions?'

'I am in as great earnest as you,' she replied in a tone of passion; 'and Clifford Castle shall soon resound with a welcome to King Edward.'

‘The same rejoicings, then, shall serve as a knell for the departure of Howard de Clifford,’ was his melancholy but decided reply.

‘This is an idle threat to drive me from my purpose,’ she said, passionately; ‘but I can be as firm as you. You have disappointed me most grievously before; your conduct to-day has crowned it all.’ She rose from her seat and walked to the door, which she shut behind her violently, and the Earl was left alone.

De Clifford was thus suddenly thrown into circumstances of manifold perplexity. With regard to the king, his resolution was taken; but he did not expect to be so soon obliged to declare himself. He would have raised no tumult, he would have encouraged no insubordination; but he had hoped he might not be called upon to give any open indication of attachment to the sovereign’s person, while the grass had not yet covered the remains of the slaughtered hosts, over whose bodies he had walked to his throne; and while Henry remained a prisoner in the capital that had been so lately his own, and had confessed him its lawful monarch even from his infant years. De Clifford looked with interest to the Prince of Wales; were his character to add his father’s gentleness and modesty to his mother’s talent and energy, he would indeed be a prince likely to adorn the English throne. It was evident, should De Clifford absent himself from home during the king’s visit, he would be a marked man,—should he stay to entertain him, he was finally committed to stand by his fortunes. There was no middle course; he must leave the country. If he took that step, he would be in the light of a banished man; and his return must be at some indefinite time, overruled by circumstances into which he could not now penetrate. A train of very painful thought passed through his mind; there was no way of escaping the conclusion that he must become an alien from

the land and halls of his fathers, and the thought was agony.

He was startled from his painful reverie by the bustle of an arrival at the Castle, and the entrance of his page to announce visitors. Company he knew was expected; but now it was impossible for him to meet them. 'My horse, Blondel,' he said, 'immediately.'

'Yes, my lord,' said the page; but he lingered, and looked at his master inquiringly.

'I have told you your errand,' said the Earl.


'Shall I—shall—?' began Blondel, hesitatingly.

'No, no; I shall not require your attendance,' said De Clifford, anticipating his question.

The page was an orphan boy whom the Earl had taken under his protection; he found pleasure in bestowing instruction upon him, and those early lessons were received into good ground. There was no one on earth Blondel loved so much as his master; but he was subjected to many vexations in the establishment of Clifford Castle. Often did the remark meet his ear, 'The Earl might have something more of a gentleman to wait upon him.' He was always sorry when Lord de Clifford left home without him; but even his presence were an encumbrance in his master's present state of feeling.

The trampling of horses was heard upon the draw-bridge, and the sound of voices in busy debate about trifles, doors creaking, and footsteps hurrying through the passages. To escape them all, the Earl went hurriedly out at a private door; he found Blondel holding his horse in readiness, and instantly vaulting into the saddle, he rode away by a favourite and well-known road.

CHAPTER IV.

S the Earl pursued his solitary way to Pierrepoint Manor, he endeavoured to investigate the motives which had led him to the adoption of a line of conduct which must plunge him in difficulty, and might carry with it to the minds of others a very unfavourable impression. It would seem to have originated in pride, in prejudice, in contradiction; there might be an admixture of these unamiable qualities wearing the disguise of virtues; he knew it was quite possible to be deceiving himself; it were much easier and far more agreeable to act otherwise, but after turning the subject in every possible light, he could arrive at no new decision. It was fortunate for him that his sure-footed favourite knew the road so well by which he meant to travel, for he left him entirely to his own guidance, and he halted at the gate of the Manor. Peace seemed to claim this favoured spot as her own, in a country torn by intestine divisions; and its complete stillness seemed peculiarly soothing at this moment. Henry was not at home, and he found Julia alone in her own little sitting apartment—in modern times it would be called her boudoir.

Luxury had not yet filled even a lady's sanctum with all the elegant trifles that the inventive powers of a later age have furnished; but if Julia Pierrepoint's apartment could not vie with those of its class in the nineteenth century,

its decorations evinced the arrangements of a chaste and rational taste. A jessamine crept up the wall, and fringed the window; its fragrant blossoms were now peeping star-like from its dark foliage, and its shoots of latest growth were encroaching on the lattice, which opened upon a rich and varied prospect. The Earl tried to assume a composure he did not feel. 'You did not expect to see me here to-day,' he said, as he seated himself, 'and at one time I did not expect it myself; but I think Agincourt knows where I should and would be, for he brought me straight to the Manor almost before I was aware.'

'Then we are to attribute this visit to him,' said Julia, smiling.

'No, no,' rejoined the Earl; 'we were quite agreed upon the point. But with what multifarious symptoms of occupation your table is garnished!—here is an open book, a tree half done in tapestry, and the lute.'

'I was trying on the lute,' she observed, 'the air composed by poor captive King James,¹ till the recollection of his sad fate, coupled with the plaintive music, made me melancholy, and I put it aside.'

'Here is Wycliffe, and Chaucer,' he remarked, as he proceeded in the investigation of the contents of Julia's table. 'Poor Chaucer! he spent a fortune in the support of his countrymen, who, like himself, were expatriated for their conscientious opinions; and yet, in an evil hour, he was overcome to betray their secrets—cancelling thus the debt of gratitude they owed him. Alas! weak, weak, human nature!'

'It is pleasant to think, however,' said Julia, 'that after all his vicissitudes, he ended his days in peace at his own castle of Donnington.'

But De Clifford's mind was far from being engaged in the subjects on which he was touching, and a restless

¹ Note D

manner and wandering eye betrayed in some degree his uneasiness. He was conscious that his absence of mind was remarked, his agitation would not conceal; he paused to ask himself why he thus strove to disguise his feelings?—to ward off for a few short moments the unpleasant disclosure he came on purpose to make?—it was weakness, and he must conquer it.

‘Julia,’ he said, ‘you sit here in your sweet little bower, as if a calm denied to the rest of the world had chosen this for its home. There seems no agitation here but such as I import, and I am unwilling to break the repose.’

‘I have thought something had ruffled you ever since you came in,’ she said; ‘but, indeed, whatever is the matter, you bring no new thing to Pierrepont Manor, if it is in the shape of sorrow. Peaceful as they now seem, these walls have witnessed many distressing scenes.’

‘I know it,’ he rejoined; ‘but I have never seen anything here but a blissful calm. It has been to me like a sheltered creek in the shore of life’s troubled sea, where I have gladly drawn up my little shallop and rested awhile; but I must be made to feel the sin and folly of taking up any rest short of the promised, not that I ever expected to pass through the world as if it had no blight in its constitution,—indeed, I have often imagined that I should sooner or later have to pass through many difficulties, but I did not expect to be called so suddenly to the task.’

‘I am quite at a loss to understand,’ said Julia, ‘unless, indeed, you refer to some new trouble arising out of the Abbot’s dislike.’

‘Not so,’ he replied. ‘I must appear in a very strange light to you to-day, Julia; but when you hear all, you will not be surprised that I am labouring under excited feelings. What would you say to my being obliged to leave England, and that a self-banished man?’

'Indeed, you speak riddles,' she answered, becoming quite pale.

'Is it better to do so, Julia,' he resumed, 'than to remain divested of independence and self-respect?'

'I am quite unable to frame an answer without an explanation of your meaning,' she replied.

'I shall try to explain myself with more composure,' he said. 'The troubled state of this country has reduced many to a situation as distressing as mine; but each feels his own personal grievance, and mine has in its train a trial hard to bear, inasmuch as I cannot bear it altogether alone. I am called upon, without any delay, to make a demonstration which would bind me irrevocably to the fortunes of the house of York. No choice is left between this and an assumption that I am hostile to their interest.'

'The country seems more quiet at this moment than it has been for many years,' she observed. 'I do not understand how you could be placed in so inextricable a dilemma.'

'You are aware,' he resumed, 'that the white rose has been taken into favour at our house for some time past. On this point I was as passive as I could, for various reasons that I need not now particularize; but passive measures will not serve me now, for I am called upon to entertain the king at Clifford Castle, and this is what I will not do.'

'How—how has this strange event come about?' she asked. 'Has his Majesty selected you for the bestowment of this honour?'

'He comes by special invitation,' he replied. 'I need not be more explicit on this head with you, who so well know my circumstances. All has been done, I do believe, with an anxious desire for my good; but, by an unaccountable infatuation, I was kept in ignorance till the die was cast for me. Only one course seems now open, and it is peculiarly painful. One there is, and perhaps but one, that will do my motives common justice. Julia, you will not

misconstrue me ; to others the part I act will wear the dark colour of perverse contradiction. You are in possession of my sentiments respecting Edward of York. If he can rule England in peace, and heal her wounds, I shall be satisfied. I never thought of faction ; I did think of passing through life without mingling my name with his cause, at least till time should instruct me how to act. The Prince of Wales may live to claim the suffrages of the nation ; should he prove himself worthy of these, he certainly should have mine. If he ever has my poor support, he must have it unsullied by the reproach of my having temporized with his foe in the day of his desertion. If I were to receive the honour of King Edward's visit and offer to him the hospitalities of my house, would not the sacred character of a chosen guest seem guarantee enough of my attachment ? He might justly deem me a deceiver if it proved the contrary, and I should thereafter consider my honour pledged to him. I scorn the policy that has been too much the fashion among us, of passing from side to side, just as the balance inclined in favour of York or Lancaster. If ever I give my allegiance to this king, it must be for a better reason than only because he is triumphant ; it must not involve desertion of the vanquished ; it shall never be while Prince Edward lives.

'And is there no way of avoiding this royal visit ?' Julia could scarcely speak ; but striving to control herself, she added, after a brief silence, 'I am sure the Countess would give up her scheme on your explanation.'

'But, Julia, she cannot,' he said ; 'for the invitation was given and accepted, and the time fixed, before I had a single hint of the design. There is no possibility of escape from the difficulty ; it only remains to abide the consequences. I am sure when you have time to take a deliberate view of this matter, which has come upon us both with trying abruptness, you will agree with me.'

'I offer no counsel,' she said; 'advice in a matter like this is out of my sphere. All I can do is to ask that you may be led to arrive at a righteous decision; but you will pardon me if I say that I think your resolution has been taken too hastily to have been duly weighed.'

'I own it wears this appearance,' he admitted; 'but emergencies do arise which oblige us to act without delay; in such cases we must be guided by those principles we have taken as our rules of action.'

'But the consequences of this step are too important to be risked without mature consideration,' she said.

'If the action be right in itself, we may not shrink from consequences,' he replied.

'You are right, quite right,' responded Julia. 'My argument was not genuine, it was dictated by my weakness.'

'Nay, I would rather say by your gentleness,' observed De Clifford; 'but that gentleness is not incompatible with firmness, and this I am sure you will prove when occasion requires it. I cannot conceal my fears that you may be placed in circumstances to call it out. I had hoped to have kept some of life's ills at a distance from you, and the renouncement of this prospect is the most painful part of my trial. Two years had not to run their course before I had hoped to make your home beneath the shelter of my old battlements; but that is a long period for the expectations of short-sighted creatures that cannot boast of to-morrow. You are under surer and better guardianship than mine. The leaves are now becoming sear; but I shall not see them fall in England.'

'So soon!' she said in a tremulous voice. 'I cannot realize this to my mind.'

'Julia,' he said, 'in a fortnight hence, as I am informed, the festivities of the Castle take place.'

'And is it possible that there is no way of averting such an alternative?' she asked.

'Alas! no,' he replied. 'Could you but point out any means of honourable escape from it, believe me you should find a willing ear; if I am guided by any wrong motive, I hope I shall be taught wherein lies my error. And now, to dismiss self, Julia, I anticipate with deep anxiety the unknown trials that may await you. Your limited intercourse with general society places you, for the present, in comparative security from the danger of malicious observation; but your lot in life may yet be cast among those who will not fail to discover that you disagree with them on the most important of all subjects. Your brother's confessor seems indisposed to make inquisition; you cannot expect this forbearance to be extensively diffused, because the men, whatever their natural dispositions may be, are bound to obey the dictates of the Church they serve with idolatrous reverence; and when I remember that the best and gentlest among them can forget themselves in the fiery zeal that excites a crusade of deadly persecution against all who differ from them, I confess I should look with caution, even on such men as Father Swinderby.'

'I shall have too many reasons to continue in retirement to be easily induced to quit it,' she said; 'but I have long endeavoured to familiarize my mind with the danger to which you allude, and I trust if such an ordeal awaits me, I shall not be forsaken.'

'I trust and believe so,' observed De Clifford; 'but I wish to impress upon you my conviction that the period is not far distant when your seclusion shall be broken. Now that Edward of York has leisure, he will use all means to strengthen his party; he will not fail to cast his eyes on every one whose name may grace his courtly train, and whose retainers may swell his army. Your brother will naturally desire to bear his father's style and dignity, and the knighthood, to which his fortune and descent

entitle him, will be readily obtained on his appearance at King Edward's court.¹ He is exactly the person to be fascinated there; gay, lively, confiding, he will soon find the scene attractive, and you shall one day find yourself called upon to act your part in the pageant.'

'No,' she said with earnestness; 'Henry may be led to love such society; you cannot think me so inconsistent as to do so.'

'I am quite sure,' he said, 'that your taste would never bring you into such a position; but necessity may, and then come trials the extent of which I cannot foresee, but of which I must warn you; may they be averted! But if they do come, you will remember my words. Pardon me, for it is possible I may be seeing matters in a dark light, through the medium of my own dark and sad-coloured vision. This, however, I must add; it will be your part to warn Henry that treachery may lurk behind a flattering tongue, and a cold heart beat beneath a bedizened garment. I cannot speak to him on the subject, and if I should, it would be of no avail now. Besides, I wish to keep my plans secret from him, and all the world.'

'And how?' asked the distressed girl. 'I do not see how Lady de Clifford can remain in ignorance of your movements.'

'She will not believe me in earnest,' he replied; 'and unless I am questioned I shall mention my decision to her no more. I cannot pursue this subject coolly,' he continued, rising from his chair; 'I must have some solitary hours to subdue my rebellious spirit; when it is a little better schooled I shall come to you again; but I am not calm enough, and only fit to be alone.'

'But,' said Julia anxiously, 'you cannot have matured any plan.'

'Not matured,' he said, resuming his seat; 'but I hope

¹ Note E.

to find somewhere on the continent of Europe a Christian people with whom I can unite; such we know to exist there, in the shelter of deep valleys among the mountains. There also an asylum may be provided for me.'

There was a long silence, which had its own unobtrusive eloquence. Notwithstanding his proposal to be gone, De Clifford prolonged his stay to the last possible moment; for, not wishing to meet Henry Pierrepoint under the influence of excited feelings, he had to make it far shorter than he desired.

He returned home very slowly, and the shadows of evening were closing when he arrived at the Castle. Wishing to escape every creature, he avoided the principal entrance, and forded the river which ran at the base of the rock on which the edifice stood. Blondel was on the watch, and ordering him to follow with lights, he retired to his own chamber, and desired that no one should disturb him for the evening.

CHAPTER V.

ACTIVE preparations went on for the royal visit, but no further conversation on the subject took place between the Earl and his mother. Pride sealed the lips of the Countess, the hopelessness of the case had a like effect on her son, and thus they were verging to a crisis of intense importance to each, with outward silence, but many heartburnings. Could it be they should part, and no further discussion take place between them? The grounds on which each had to rest their arguments were equally immoveable. Repent it as she might, De Clifford knew his mother could not now alter her unenviable position, and he could not abandon his. She could not believe him serious in his threat of leaving his home at such a juncture; he could not risk so much for the indulgence of a whim, as she considered it,—the carrying out of a principle, as he would call it. Visitors at the Castle increased in number; he found it difficult to give them as much of his company as courtesy absolutely required. He could not be often at Pierrepoint Manor, because the necessity for concealing his real position led him to shun Henry, who, indeed, was in a mood not very favourable towards him, for reasons to be explained afterwards, and De Clifford, it must be supposed, passed a very unhappy time.

Too soon for his feelings, the day came round when he

was to hold his last—his parting interview with Julia ; he almost wished he could depart without this trial. But a most important duty lay before him ; he shrank from its performance, he left it to the last, he blamed himself, and still he hesitated ; but procrastination could find no further plea, and at the appointed time he found himself with the heaviest burden he had ever carried there, within the grounds of Pierrepont Manor.

We shall not attempt to investigate the thoughts and feelings of Julia Pierrepont ; they reposed unrevealed in the sanctuary of her own heart. That morning her brother had gone to enjoy those field sports he had learned to love in his early boyhood ; and she had strolled out to pass a meditative hour in her favourite walk. It was shadowed by rows of magnificent old trees, forming a long sheltered archway. The leaves were losing their summer verdure, and assuming the varied tints of autumn ; while the faint breeze was already stripping the branches of their garniture. The whole scene was much in unison with the sensitive but sober-minded creature who looked upon it, and who was striving to bring into subjection her every thought and desire to the one unerring standard by which she wished to be guided. The sound of a footstep startled her, and turning round, she saw Howard de Clifford. He had entered the grounds by a private road, and as he was making his way towards the Manor he caught sight of Julia. She coloured deeply on observing him ; for do we not sometimes feel as if the thought to which we have given no utterance was yet legible to a fellow-creature ?

They met in silence ; for there are feelings too deep for ready utterance. They took two or three turns in silence ; it was broken by De Clifford.

‘ Julia,’ he said, ‘ it is impossible for me to express half the depth and interest that is thrown into this interview. Years must roll their course before I shall again utter my

thoughts to you,—perhaps we may never meet again.’ He observed her change countenance, and he quickly added, ‘But have we not one bond of union that no earthly circumstance could produce, neither can any event dissolve?’

‘We have,’ she responded, timidly.

‘This bond,’ he resumed, ‘is the Christian’s peculiar privilege, while he is also as much, nay more than the world’s votaries, heir to all the other blessings that smooth the path of existence. His natural feelings are not turned out of their legitimate channels, but they are made to flow more gently, like the still waters through the green pastures. Such is the tendency of these gracious principles he embraces; but the unsubdued evil of the human heart, alas! is prone to mar this beautiful order, even after having been in some degree taught to appreciate it. This, I am conscious, is peculiarly applicable to myself, and of late especially I have been guilty of exhibiting an unbecoming irritation in word and manner. You have seen it, Julia, and I wish you to know that I have been keenly sensible of it myself.’

‘You have been more than usually tried,’ she said.

‘And therefore I should have been more than usually watchful, my gentle apologist,’ he rejoined. ‘But you say truly that my trial has been great, and in reality greater than human ken can well fathom. It is a trial most people will accuse me, too, of wilfully entailing on myself, though there is nothing I would not do to escape it that did not involve a sacrifice of principle.’

‘And,’ said Julia, ‘do you see now any cause to waver in your resolution?’

‘None,’ he said; ‘but reason enough to sorrow over its dire necessity. But I have yet left unsaid what I may be excused for delaying while I could. Circumstances with me are sadly changed since we pledged our mutual faith to each other. Your plighted troth is a treasure I cannot

willingly resign. Words could but ill convey an idea of my feelings at this moment; but I were unworthy of your confidence did I not now freely absolve you of the tie.'

Julia instinctively withdrew her arm from his, and they both stood still. De Clifford was endeavouring to hold, under the control of a strong mind, the feelings that nearly mastered him as he proceeded. 'Julia, I leave England with very doubtful prospects of return. In these momentous times a tie like that which has subsisted between us might prove, in some way, a cause of trouble to you. My grave may be made in a foreign land, without having it in my power even to provide for your receiving such intelligence. I did not think of involving you in distress when first I asked you to share my fortunes.'

She had remained silent; but her countenance betrayed how unlooked for had been such a proposal.

'Howard,' she said, 'this is a subject on which I must still retain my privilege of being excused from saying much; but as we are now situated, and knowing as I do your generous motives in the proposal you have just made, I shall be plain in my reply. I should despise myself, and justly deserve the scorn of others, if I were capable of accepting it. Changes many and great may come about before we meet again, if ever that be permitted; but if on your return to England you should only look on the stone that covers my grave, you will remember that Julia Pierrepont's word and heart were not among the mutable things that can vary with varying fortune.'

She had made a great effort in thus speaking out; but the simplicity and transparency of her character at once showed her that this was no time to be guided by the rules of every-day life; and she spoke to one who would understand her. His voice and manner were firmer; but his emotion was not less than her own, as he said, 'I

should be doing myself injustice, if I did not own, that I rejoice in this renewed proof of that love and confidence I value so dearly; but sad and dark is the prospect, that I may never be able to prove, otherwise than in these passing words, the amount of that value. I can only reckon among the things that were, my lands and my baronial stronghold; truth now points me out as a friendless adventurer, whose purse will be ere long exhausted, and who must then have recourse to personal exertion for his livelihood. But this ought not to be uppermost in the thoughts of one privileged to lay hold on those words of the book of life: "All things are yours."¹

'You place before me a terrible picture,' observed Julia. 'Reduced to want!'

'Nay, there is no danger of that,' he quickly said; 'a feudal hall and numerous retainers are not necessary things. If they are ever mine, I hope for enlarged grace to use them for the service of Him who exalts and abases at pleasure; but a very small proportion is sufficient for human necessities, and that I know I shall not want. But, Julia, I am constrained to tell you that I can see no human probability of my return before five or six years have passed away.'

'Six years!' she repeated.

'Yes, I made no mistake,' he resumed; 'and it was under this impression that I tasked myself to offer for your consideration a proposal I shall not now repeat. You are aware, that should Edward of York retain the crown, I shall be henceforth a proscribed man. Now the time I have named must pass away before the Prince of Wales shall have attained an age at which he may be expected to assert his rights. If he should then do so, it will be my time to revisit my deserted country. This,

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 21.

however, may never happen ; but when every prospect of my being again enabled to dwell in England has departed, then, Julia, if I be possessed of life and liberty, you may expect again to see me, were it but for a day—an hour—to bid you reckon the tie that now unites us among the recollected occurrences of happier times ; my fate shall then be sealed as a wanderer on the earth. Till then I shall never again speak of resigning it.’

‘The very brightest of your prospects savour of dreadful things,’ she said. ‘Should they be realized, scenes of bloodshed and horror must mark the coming years.’

‘They must,’ responded De Clifford ; ‘and it ill becomes a Christian to desire events, so heralded, for the sake of any private advantage. How difficult it is to separate the chaff from the wheat, even in our speculative thoughts ! I only spoke, however, in reference to the probable course of events. I should not feel myself justified in moving a feather, could I by so doing bring about a revolution, when I consider its consequences ; but I do say, that should such an occurrence become unavoidable, I think my path would be clearly enough marked out. I am still oppressed with the imagination that you may in the meantime be placed in circumstances of manifold perplexity : all I can say to you is, follow the footsteps of the flock, and they will guide you to the Tower of defence.¹ I must now charge you with a message for Henry,—I shall not see him before I depart. I should be sorry he could fancy for a moment that I intended him a slight, by concealing from him the step I am now taking ; you will explain to him that I consulted his interest by my silence. A day might come when he should feel himself awkwardly placed, could he not plead entire disconnection with my affairs. Assure him he can have no friend for the future more

¹ Psa. lxi. 3.

interested in all that concerns him than I am. Let him be made aware of all this after I have been three or four days away; I wish that time first to elapse. Your brother has hitherto been ignorant of our engagement; I think it right, with your consent, that he should be so no longer—we have spoken of this before.'

'And I have thought of it often,' she said. 'Henry is no longer to be treated as a boy; and, indeed, he merits my confidence.'

'He does,' resumed De Clifford; 'and he should have had mine fully, had I been permitted to remain in England. I shall write to him this very evening, and commit the letter to your care, to be delivered after some days have gone by. Does this meet your wishes?'

'Entirely,' she said.

They continued their slow walk through the avenue for a long time, scarcely uttering a syllable, till De Clifford, drawing out a piece of gold, broke it in two, and said, 'Julia, I may not indulge myself here much longer.' He held out half the gold, adding, 'I hope there is no superstition in this simple act: will you keep that, and I shall retain its fellow, until we meet again?'

She took it from his hand, while she said, 'I shall keep it to my dying day.'

The tongue is not fertile in expression where the heart is deeply touched; and very few more words marked the parting scene between those two individuals, who were so much to each other, and were about to separate with faint prospect of ever meeting again. They had taken many turns in the favourite walk after they spoke of separating; and now when they stood at the extremity of the avenue next to the Manor, Julia said, 'I shall accompany you to the far end of the tall trees;' but De Clifford objected.

'No, Julia,' he said; 'I cannot deprive myself of the gratification of remembering that I left you beneath the

roof of your natural protector;' and having seen her within a door of the house that led from the garden, he hastily crossed the grounds, and was out of sight in a moment. He did not trust himself to look back; and he found it difficult to believe that he had taken a final farewell of Julia Pierrepont.

CHAPTER VI.



WHEN De Clifford returned to the Castle after his parting interview with Julia Pierrepoint, he felt little disposed to join the family party; yet he made an effort to appear cheerful as he gave them an hour or two of his company. As soon as possible he disengaged himself, and quietly slipped away to his own chamber. He had made up his mind to leave the Castle before daylight the following morning, and he had some previous arrangements to make. His first care was to write a letter to Henry-Pierrepoint, and to enclose it in one addressed to Julia. This task accomplished, he summoned Blondel, and delivering the packet to him, desired him to carry it to Pierrepoint Manor, where he was to wait for further orders. Blondel was just leaving the room when Lady de Clifford entered.

‘Howard,’ she said, ‘we have missed you from our circle, and I am come to seek you. I think there is an assemblage below sufficiently attractive to prevent your spending time here. I suppose you have been engaged in business, as I see writing materials; but perhaps you will now descend with me.’

‘It always gives me pleasure that you should think my society of any consequence,’ he said.

‘I am afraid,’ she observed, as she fixed a penetrating look on him, ‘this is but an idle compliment, Howard; for

you have given me but too much reason to suppose your pleasure was elsewhere than with me.'

He felt the remark keenly; for, with the readiness at self-condemnation that marks a candid mind, his heart owned the justice of the accusation. He knew that in some cases he might have acted differently; and now, that he was so soon to be beyond her reach, he was melted, and would perhaps, even then, have consented to turn from his purpose, could he be furnished with one feasible argument for the act. The Countess little guessed the thoughts that were passing through his mind, as he replied, 'Indeed, my dear mother, it is in all sincerity I say how glad I would be to please you, if I could; it has been my misfortune not to succeed.'

'How can you tell me this?' said his mother. 'You know what my wishes have been, and have painfully thwarted them.'

'If I have,' he answered, 'it has been for the sake of principles I could not disobey.'

She made an impatient gesture as she said, 'I would just put to your own candour, if you can plead principle for the systematical manner in which, for the last week, you have kept yourself apart from all those arrangements which I am now compelled to make, and in which I have found myself without any assistance but that which is afforded by Aymer; but, poor boy, he does his best.'

'I cannot imagine,' answered the Earl, 'that any concurrence could have been expected at my hands, after the conversation we had so lately, and, as we differ so widely, it is best to avoid the subject. It is from my heart I say, that I trust Aymer will be a very great comfort to you, and supply the place of your eldest son, who, although he is so unhappy as to be placed in a position hostile to your wishes, will never yield even to him, in those feelings of duty and affection we both so largely owe you.'

The Countess was a good deal affected. 'Lend me your arm, Howard,' she said; 'we shall go and join our friends.'

While the mother and son were thus labouring under feelings of oppression which were hard to conceal, a merry party in the withdrawing room were amusing themselves as suited their respective tastes.

Bright eyes, and inquisitive eyes, had marked the Earl's demeanour; and observations were made on the subject. Young ladies were quite as fond of their little tête-a-têtes in drawing-room corners as they are now; and that evening, two of Lady de Clifford's fair and youthful visitors had been in conversation in a window deeply embayed in the massive wall, discussing the merits of their noble host.

'It is quite a pity,' said Maude de Wilton, 'the Earl is so grave; he looks as if he could be agreeable if he liked.'

'And so he can,' responded her companion, 'though perhaps he is rather peculiar. Yet I never saw him so provoking as he has been since you arrived; but there are reasons for his singularity.'

'Are there?' inquired the first speaker. 'Reasons, oh! I should like to hear them; do tell me.'

Her companion shook her head mysteriously, cast a glance at the company, as if fearful of observation, and her manner increased the questioner's curiosity. 'I do not like to speak of them,' she answered; 'and perhaps you had better not hear them.'

'Why, why, Eleanor?' said the stranger, 'you excite my curiosity dreadfully; I cannot rest until you tell me this secret.'

'I am afraid you will imagine the Castle haunted, if I do,' replied Eleanor; 'and I think your apartment is near the east turret.'

'But I shall beg to be removed,' said her companion, 'if there is anything frightful about it; so you must really tell me the worst at once.'

‘Well, then,’ said Eleanor, lowering her voice to a whisper, ‘they do say that the Earl spends the most of his time in a chamber he has in that same turret, and no one knows very well what he can be doing there; but it is surmised he studies necromancy. And it is well known that he has some of Friar Bacon’s books there, as also sundry odd-looking instruments;¹ and my waiting-woman has been told by the servants, that light has been seen and footsteps heard in the east turret, when every Christian person was asleep.’

‘You want to terrify me,’ said the listener; ‘for how could they see and hear these things if they were asleep?’

‘Oh! you may believe me or not, as you please,’ said the young lady; ‘but the servants are ready to testify to the facts.’ Just as she had said this, the door opened, and the Countess entered, leaning on the arm of her son.

‘I am sure he does not look a bit like a necromancer,’ said her friend.

De Clifford walked to the window at which they were standing, and attempted to enter into conversation; but he extracted little more than monosyllables, for their previous remarks made them shy, and they soon slipped away to another part of the room. The Earl was left in the window alone, and seemed absorbed in gazing on the scene without. He was not long left to his musings, for Lady de Clifford proposed music; and foreign as it was to his wishes at that time, in compliance with her request, he took his harp, and accompanying it with his voice, sang a favourite song.

‘If the sounds that are heard in the east turret resemble these, Eleanor,’ whispered our fair friend of the window, ‘I do not mind how often I hear them; and I do not believe an open brow like that ever brooded over the dark science.’

¹ Note F.

'Well, well,' said Eleanor, rather annoyed at her companion's unbelief; 'I like music as well as you do, but it would not reconcile me to the room you occupy. Perhaps you may tell me another story to-morrow morning.'

Neither music nor conversation could charm away the gloom that hung oppressively on the mind of Lady de Clifford. She had collected around her a party willing to taste of enjoyment, and looking forward with sensations of pleasure to the magnificent entertainment that was expected. She was this evening unable to participate in the smallest degree in their feelings. With observation quickened to the fullest extent, she was particularly struck with her son's manner as he bade her good-night; she strove to conquer these uncomfortable fancies, but she passed an uneasy night; and unaccustomed as she was to that troublesome indecision of mind which is ever suggesting that we might have conducted matters differently after our election has been already made, she now heartily wished she had been less rash in placing herself and her son in such difficulties. De Clifford also had his own inward struggles; but it is needless to detail the agitating reflections that occupied the last few hours of his stay at Clifford Castle. He had taken measures to secure a noiseless egress, after the whole household had retired to rest. It was a moment of intense suffering when he closed the door behind him, and stepped across the threshold of his home. The hooting of the owls was a familiar sound; their melancholy notes had often overtaken him at such an hour alone at his studies, and were disregarded; they now fell with painful effect on a heavy heart and tortured feelings. But there was no time to linger; he wished to be many miles distant before daylight. It was the work of a very short time to saddle his horse, and he soon left Clifford Castle far behind him.

The early breakfast of seven o'clock passed over without

his being generally missed, for it was customary to take that meal in private; but surmises were afloat among those more immediately interested, and Lady de Clifford feared that her son had really taken the fatal step, in which she had tried to disbelieve. As the day advanced, certainty began to succeed suspense; for such an absence, unaccounted for, was contrary to all his orderly habits. She resolved that no eye should mark her grievous disappointment, no ear be the depository of her embittered feelings. She endeavoured to give her regrets to the winds, and refused herself an hour to sorrow over them. Much was to be done which she alone could arrange; and for this day she would not breathe the fact of Howard's flight even to Aymer, who must thereafter fill his brother's place. The dinner hour arrived; a substantial repast covered the long oaken table in the dining hall; the guests were assembling, but the dais at the end, where the master was wont to sit, was vacant.

'Aymer,' said the Countess, 'take your brother's place; he does not dine at home to-day.'

'Not dine at home to-day!' repeated the young man; but he soon noticed that his mother did not wish to be questioned. The meal passed over as such meals usually did, consuming from two to three hours; while the intervals between the courses were enlivened by the family jester, or the more rational amusement of music. After the conclusion of the repast, the party dispersed, to indulge their peculiar tastes in such occupations as suited them, and Lady de Clifford to remodel her plans, in the certainty she now felt of the Earl's departure. Aymer must perform his part, and another must take Aymer's place. She had no difficulty in fixing on the individual who should undertake this office; she had a favourite nephew, who had passed many of his boyish days with her sons, and whom she expected to arrive on the following

day. He was exactly the person to understand what he ought to do without prompting, and to cover, by a certain quickness of word or manner, any unforeseen awkwardness that might arise. She determined on disclosing to Gerald de Courcy the difficulty of her position; she had no fears about his address in the business, but she had her misgivings about Aymer. He was not made aware of his brother's resolution to absent himself from the banquet till summoned to his mother's chamber the next morning; he was quite confounded at the disclosure, and his countenance betrayed his dismay.

'If you look as disconcerted on every emergency that may occur, you will act your part amazingly well,' observed his mother, sarcastically.

'I am so totally at a loss to understand what Howard could mean,' he explained.

'My object now is not to investigate his conduct,' said his mother, 'but to put you on your guard respecting your own. It is my desire that no astonishment at his absence be expressed by any one.'

'But, objected Aymer, 'there will be an hundred conjectures afloat.'

'It matters not,' she said; 'I aid them not by a single hint.'

'And who is to supply my place, if I am to fill Howard's?' he inquired.

'Gerald de Courcy,' replied his mother.

Oh, he is ready for any part; nothing comes amiss to him.' said Aymer.

'I wish I could pay you that compliment,' said Lady de Clifford. 'From this moment I beg you will consider that it devolves on you to do the honours of this house; I hope my nephew may be here in an hour or two, and after I have spoken with him, the weight of this wretched affair shall be, so far, partly off my hands.' She conversed with

her son a long time, entered fully into the detail of her plans, and before they separated her nephew was announced. He was summoned to the family council, and was a very seasonable addition. De Courcy was the son of Lady de Clifford's sister, who had married into an Irish family; he had the ready wit and showy manners that characterize his countrymen, and was always reckoned an acquisition to enliven a dull hour, or a dull company. He was much vexed at the state of matters in the Castle, where he looked only for enjoyment; but entering at once into his aunt's views, he proved as serviceable as he was welcome, and relieved her mind considerably from its harassing burden.

CHAPTER VII.

PIERREPOINT MANOR and its occupants now demand our attention.

After Julia had parted from De Clifford, she retired to spend an hour or two alone, and on the privileged privacy of that retirement we shall not intrude. Her brother did not return home until late; he was less inclined to talk than usual, and she was not anxious to induce conversation. On the few last occasions of De Clifford's visits at the Manor, Henry had been absent, and as circumstances led Julia to avoid mentioning his name, he imagined his absence to have been protracted. He would not probably have thought of the matter at all, but that certain suspicions had taken possession of his mind. For a long time the coldness and neglect of Lady de Clifford towards his sister had occasioned him great annoyance. He was attached to the Earl, and could not resist his warm and steady friendship, which was not the least affected by the unpleasant family feeling that had arisen; were it otherwise, he would have broken all intercourse. Since the first surmise of the fête to be given at Clifford Castle had reached the ears of young Pierrepont, the Earl had not been, as he believed, at the Manor, and as time wore on, and he neither saw nor heard of him, it seemed clearly made out that there was a systematic avoidance. It now appeared self-evident, that the Earl was about to enlist himself on the side of the Yorkists; and

no less evident that there was no intention of confiding the matter to him; he was not to be of the select number invited to do honour to the king, and to receive honour by his society. Accusations, groundless as they were unjust, rankled within his breast, and remaining untold, they continued growing and fermenting to prodigious dimensions. He was unwilling to disclose his suspicions to Julia: there was none other with whom he chose to communicate on this subject. The fact was, a reflection more bitter, and touching his feelings more keenly than anything else, was painfully connected with his sister. He had believed for some time past that her affections were engaged, and was she to be slighted? This day his sport had led him in the direction of Clifford Castle, and some unusual temporary erections, and a general bustle that prevailed about it, lent their aid to swell the current of offended pride, bringing vividly before him the subject-matter of his supposed grievances, and he had returned home under the influence of these accumulated materials of vexation. The evening passed in the ordinary routine, and little interest as she felt in the matter, Julia asked her brother if he had had a successful day. She extracted little more from him than monosyllables, and he fell into a long fit of apparent abstraction. Rousing himself at last, he said, 'Julia, I have been pondering on the very extraordinary conduct of Lord de Clifford, and I confess I cannot fall on any way of accounting for it.'

'What is the matter?' inquired Julia.

'There are certain things to which I do not think you can be blind,' he answered. 'He has not been here for a long time; that, of course, is of no sort of consequence, but it is coupled with evident reasons I do not like.'

'It is not so very long since Lord de Clifford has been at the Manor,' pleaded Julia; 'he has often been much longer absent, without your remarking it.'

'May be so,' said Henry, 'the time is not worth calculating; but you are not ignorant that the Castle is under great preparations for the entertainment of Edward the Fourth. I am not complimented by being entrusted with the important information, that Lord de Clifford changes the red rose for the white. He seldom talked politics; but it is no secret that his family, like our own, have been Lancastrians.'

'So they have,' responded Julia.

'You take all this very coolly,' observed her brother; 'but with your uncommon ability of finding excuses for everybody, I would just thank you to invent one for behaviour so strange.'

'I do not mean to offer any,' she replied; 'but I do not doubt, the Earl will be able to explain himself, when the proper time comes.'

'And pray, who is the judge of the proper time?' exclaimed the impatient Henry. 'I have my time, and I am resolved that De Clifford shall account to me for his conduct, and that to my satisfaction, or he and my house shall forthwith become strangers to each other.'

'Oh! Henry, pray, do compose yourself,' said his sister entreatingly.

'I do not value his friendship a straw!' exclaimed the impetuous Pierrepont.

'That is very little, certainly,' said his sister with a sigh; 'surely it is not worth your while to vex yourself about the conduct of one you esteem so lightly.'

'As to that,' explained Henry, 'I mean, that if he sees fit to change his mind, he is welcome. I did like him, it is true, though we were different enough; but do you think I value myself so little as not to believe that he does himself as much injury as he does me?'

'Dear Henry,' she observed, 'we are all apt to think too highly of ourselves; wait for a few days, and at the end

of that time, if Lord de Clifford finds no valid apology for all the delinquency you complain of, I shall quite agree with you in saying that his conduct is unjustifiable.'

'Agreed,' said Henry, 'I am glad you go with me so far; and that I may not break the compact almost as soon as made, I shall go out and leave you for a little.'

Julia was glad to be left alone; the part she was acting was very painful to her open and candid disposition. Various reasons had prevented her from disclosing to her brother the fact of her engagement to De Clifford;—a considerable time had to pass away before their union could take place; within that time how many unforeseen events might arise; and it had been judged best to delay making the disclosure. But Julia felt uncomfortable upon the subject. Had her brother been older and more steady, she would have acted otherwise; and she very often wished for a favourable opportunity of admitting him into this, to her, momentous secret; but the longer it remained untold, the more difficult seemed the task.

After he went out she sat at the window until it became almost quite dark; and when her brother returned she was glad she had not ordered lights, for she had been weeping over the combination of distresses that rose before her.

'Julia,' he said, 'I do not understand this mystery; who do you think I met just now walking in here most deliberately, but Blondel?'

'Indeed!' she responded.

'Yes, truly,' he resumed; 'I asked him if he had any message for me, and he replied, none; but that he was instructed by his master to stay here till he should receive further orders. Can your wisdom assign a reason for this?'

Now Julia certainly could, but she would not at that moment, and her brother continued, half addressing her,

half soliloquizing, 'To send his page here to stay at such a time, and without assigning any reason! I am puzzled.'

'Of what use is conjecture?' she said; 'a very short time may unravel all these perplexities.'

'Nay,' repeated Pierrepont, 'I am resolved to learn what De Clifford means, and that before I am much older.'

'Having come to that resolution,' observed Julia, 'I hope you will remember the compact we entered into only a little while ago.'

Henry sat down in silence; but in a short time he said, 'Of course I should not wish Blondel to experience any difference here; let him wait his master's commands; he is a right trusty varlet; I wish I had one like him.'

When Julia retired to her room, Blondel, who was on the watch, contrived to be on the staircase, that he might commit to her own hands the packet with which he was entrusted. Enclosed was a letter from De Clifford for her brother, making a full disclosure of the relation in which he stood to Julia. He entered fully into his reasons for not sooner entrusting Henry with the secret; and, expressing the brotherly affection he entertained for him, took a warm and affectionate farewell. He did not enter into the minute details of those reasons which had influenced his resolution in declining to receive the king in person, and which consequently obliged him to leave England, referring Henry to his sister, who could tell him. Three whole days must pass away, by the Earl's particular request, before she was at liberty to put this letter into Henry's hands, and the time appeared to her unusually distant, she was so anxious to enter into an explanation with him. He was carrying on improvements at some distance from the house, which induced him, at this particular time, to be absent the greater part of the day, and this Julia felt to be quite a relief. On the fourth morning he was preparing to go

out, when she stopped him by saying, 'I have something for you;' she placed the letter in his hand, and left the room.

Henry perused it with the deepest astonishment: he had not been altogether blind to the probability of such a result, but he did not believe in the actual existence of a positive engagement; and he endured the twofold vexation of finding that while he had been kept in ignorance, his sister had suffered herself to be bound by a tie which must now involve her in distress of a protracted and undefinable nature. He was displeased, and sat down to consider how he should act. His first thought was to go out without speaking to her; but he had marked the beseeching look with which she had put the letter into his hands, and he felt that the temporary indulgence of his dignity would be dearly purchased by adding a mortification to the troubles she had already to endure. He made up his mind to follow her, and enter into an explanation at once; he knocked at her door, and was instantly admitted. Julia had been in tears; she strove to conceal it, but her agitation was painfully manifest.

'Julia,' he said, 'you are of course acquainted with the contents of this letter; it is useless, and indeed impossible, to express how much they have confounded me.' She was silent, and he proceeded: 'I do not think I have been particularly well used, I must say, throughout. I do not altogether blame you, but De Clifford owed me some confidence.'

'If there is blame, indeed I cannot refuse my share of it,' she said; 'if any be excused, it should be the absent.'

'I do blame De Clifford, and that keenly,' resumed Henry; 'he might, and should have openly expressed, to me at least, his political views, and consequent intentions; he cannot have been ignorant of the unfavourable impression his concealment was calculated to make on my mind,

and if that was of any consequence he ought to have prevented it.'

'He anxiously desired you might be made aware that he consulted your interest by his silence on the subject of his determination; he thought it was possible a time might come when it would be well for you to be able to plead entire ignorance of his proceedings.'

'That was rather a refinement on caution, I think,' observed Pierrepont; 'but let that pass; there is something that touches me more. Are you then really pledged to a man in so desperate a dilemma?'

She made an effort to say, 'That pledge was given at a time when no shadow of these untoward events could be seen; it surely does not remain for me to tell you how it became a Pierrepont to act in the sequel!' she would have said a Christian, but she spoke as he could best understand.

'He should have freed you from such a promise,' observed Henry.

'He desired to do so,' she said; 'but would you wish or expect me to act such a part?' He was silent, and she proceeded: 'You know, Henry, that De Clifford belongs to the number of those with whom I am in heart and faith associated; and this, in many important particulars, separates us from others.'

'More's the pity,' observed her brother.

'I am not going to argue the point now,' she resumed; 'but I was about to say that the circumstances to which I alluded have put a rivet on the tie which unites us, that renders it impossible that our interests can ever be separated; a case like ours is calculated to produce a strength and a refinement of attachment that can scarcely, I think, be felt by those who suffer this present world to furnish the only attraction that unites them. My dear brother, to you alone I could be thus explicit; it is once for all. I

know when you take an unprejudiced view of this case, your own generous feelings will show you that there is no need for further explanation.'

The young man had not conquered his annoyance at being only now made aware of his sister's engagement; but, on the other hand, this was the first time she seemed really to look up to him for manly protection, for hitherto his volatile and unthinking disposition had rather made him dependent on her for advice. The mortification, then, was balanced by certain gratified feelings, and after a short silence he said,—

'I am sad to think of this untoward blighting of your prospects, Julia. De Clifford will never be able to return to this country. Were he what I did hope to see him one day, there is no man I know I should have consented so readily to bestow you on; for I did think him a fine fellow, despite his lollardism.'

'My poor brother!' she said, extending her hand to him, 'there is little gall and wormwood in your nature.'


'Indeed, I should have more than enough of them if I could bestow any on you at this moment,' he replied affectionately, as he took her trembling hand in his.

Overburdened with anxiety, the struggle had been almost too much for Julia, but a very great weight was now removed, which had pressed heavily. She was soothed by the mutual confidence and understanding that was now established between herself and her brother, and he soon had the pleasure of seeing its effects; for although there was a prevailing shade of sadness induced in her manner, the agitating emotions which were so hard to bear settled down, and in process of time were exchanged for that calmness which was the natural product of a regulated and chastened spirit.

In the course of a few days a letter was left at the door for Julia. It was from De Clifford; he had reached the

coast, and was about to embark for the Continent. Enclosed was a note for Henry soliciting his kindness for the poor page, who thenceforth became a member of the household. The favourite horse was sent back to the Castle; but the messenger knew not his employer's name, and so all trace of the exile was lost.

CHAPTER VIII.

E must now turn to the occurrences at Clifford Castle, the festive semblance of which was little in unison with the domestic sensations of its owners.

The Earl's absence was matter of general remark, yet no one seemed to doubt that he would reappear before the arrival of the royal *cortége*. No hint, either to foster or to discourage this conjecture, fell from the lips of Lady de Clifford, and Gerald de Courcy had the address to turn the conversation, whenever in his hearing it chanced to veer towards the dreaded point; although the frankest of the frank, he was impervious to any insinuation designed to draw from him the slightest information that might aid inquisitive surmises.

The day at last arrived which was to bring a royal guest to the Castle. Lady de Clifford was up to a very late hour on the previous night; anxiety did not suffer her to sleep, and the first streak of the dawn beheld her again on foot. No cost was spared to render the monarch's reception splendid; and as she cast her eyes over the sumptuous preparations, she felt that they wanted but one ingredient to complete them. That her wealth and power could not now command, and the whole was incapable of conveying to her mind one feeling of real satisfaction. It was arranged that a band of vassals, as a guard of honour,

headed by De Courcy, should go to a little distance, to meet the king and escort him to the Castle gate, where Aymer, in quality of lord and master, should receive the royal guest, and conduct him to the interior in person. Aymer de Clifford was ill at ease in his position; he was employed in giving some orders, when De Courcy crossed the court, and struck by the expression of his countenance, he drew him aside, saying, 'I would not for any consideration that King Edward's eye should rest on a visage so completely out of sorts as yours, in his entertainer; pray, do try to look brisk and cheerful, and all shall go well.'

'It is easy for you to talk,' said his cousin; 'but you know very well how unpleasant the situation is, in which I am unfortunately placed.'

'What! elevated to the undisputed lordship of this noble house,' exclaimed De Courcy; 'a mighty misery indeed!'

'I thought you could have spared your raillery on this subject, at least,' observed his cousin, somewhat angrily; 'it was only last night you were pleased, with all suitable gravity, to deplore this most unaccountable business of Howard's to my mother.'

'And I did it from my heart,' responded Gerald, earnestly; 'but there's another part to act to-day; we shall have time enough for indulgence in family feeling when this pageant is over. I beseech you be careful. Up to this moment I am satisfied that all our guests remain in utter ignorance of the truth of the matter; our part is to keep them in the dark, and to conceal our unfortunate circumstances from the king.'

'But the Earl of Warwick,' observed Aymer.

'Leave him to my aunt,' returned De Courcy. 'But I must away, for I am sure the king cannot be far off.'

He was right; for he had scarcely crossed the draw-

bridge, when a signal from the top of the Castle announced the appearance of the monarch's advance guard.

Clifford Castle was a massive and imposing structure; its capabilities of resisting attack, and holding out against siege, were matters of boast and confidence to its lords, ere yet cannon was brought to aid man in his work of destruction. At the time of which we write, the use of fire-arms and gunpowder had commenced; but these destructive contrivances were yet in their infancy, and the castle which we are describing was capable of formidable resistance to all the modes of offensive warfare then in repute. It stood on a perpendicular rock, which rose abruptly from the river's side; the wall so close to the edge that, covered as both were with a thick mantle of ivy, it was difficult to see where the rock terminated and where the wall commenced. The river which washed its base was deep and rapid, and on that side the Castle seemed impregnable. A moat surrounded the remaining parts; four strong towers guarded the corners, communicating with each other by the bartizan; and in the central part of the roof was an elevated look-out post, from the summit of which the family banner waved. Crossing the drawbridge, a court was entered, guarded by a double portcullis; and here an enemy might be kept at bay for some time, for three or four descending steps led to an inner court, the entrance to which was similarly defended, and within this second court was the principal entrance-door to the interior of the Castle.

The Countess had formed a design of impressing the king with the strength of her residence; and while an ostentatious welcome was provided, and in all other respects every indication of festivity was visible, the Castle wore the appearance of a place in a complete state of defence. The portcullises were down, the drawbridge was up, and sentinels paced the battlements; but these

warlike impediments to a peaceful entrance were to yield instantly to the magic sound of King Edward's name, as soon as he had had a full but rapid view of Clifford Castle in its sullen independence.

De Courcy started on his mission, in obedience to the warder's signal; the drawbridge was taken up as soon as he had crossed, and loud acclamations arose from the vassals, who were scattered at every conspicuous point along the approach.

The king rode a charger of singular beauty, with sumptuous caparisons; but the eyes of the beholder were quickly withdrawn from these accessories to the person of the accomplished rider. The monarch had a tall and graceful figure, and managed his impatient steed with the ease of a practised horseman. His blue eye bespoke intelligence, and is said to have been capable of varying its expression instantaneously, from the most indolent softness, to the quick and fiery glance of passion. His every movement was marked by dignity, and he seemed formed to command, or to captivate, as it suited him best. Gratified by the reception that greeted him as he approached the Castle, and surprised by the numbers he was continually encountering, he looked alternately at the people, or turned to converse with the Earl of Warwick, who rode next to him.

'Long live King Edward!' was vociferated on all hands. The king smiled and bowed; and ever as he acknowledged them, the acclamations rose louder and louder.

'How long will this enthusiasm last, Warwick?' said the king.

'While your highness¹ lives,' answered the Earl.

'While my popularity lives, at all events,' observed Edward.

¹ The title of Majesty in addressing the king of England was first used in the time of Henry VIII.

'I have no doubt the duration of the terms will be equal,' returned Warwick. 'Englishmen have only to know your grace better, and their attachment will become firm as adamant.'

The monarch received this flattery as a part of his accustomed tribute, and at the same moment De Courcy with his train approached. After saluting the king in silence, he passed on to the rear, and returned to accompany the procession.

'A fine young man,' observed the monarch—'a son of your kinswoman, I suppose, my lord?'

'He is nephew to the Countess, my liege,' answered Warwick, 'and a native of Ireland.'

'None the worse of that,' said Edward; 'they are wondrous showy people, and brave, moreover. But I thought we had the young hope of the De Cliffords here—perhaps he may not be so sightly a youth as this Irishman.'

'You shall presently judge for yourself, sire,' answered the Earl. 'I have not lately seen the young De Clifford; but from what I recollect of him, I should be inclined to pronounce him very superior.'

The Castle was now full in view. Edward seemed much struck by its appearance.

'That is a noble edifice,' he remarked, 'and capable of being long defended by a brave garrison.'

'And it has been so, my liege,' said Warwick.

'It is really very picturesque. But I suppose my lord De Clifford has a design in thus setting forth the vassals in so great strength for our inspection,' said the king.

'To show your grace a specimen of those upon whose aid you may reckon, should such be required.'

'Or to convince me how formidable would be their opposition,' added the king, while his lip curled into a bitter smile. As they approached still nearer, and he

could see the unattainable condition of the Castle, one of those mercurial changes for which his features were remarkable, expressed his feelings. Turning to the Earl, he muttered, 'This is a strange and mingled reception.'

'A conceit, but hardly a prudent one,' observed Warwick, who felt considerable surprise at the incongruous welcome contrived by his relative. But suspicion was now laying hold on Edward's mind; he checked the pace of his horse, and looked towards his own followers. A cloud of dust enveloped them, and at the same moment De Courcy's troop galloped past, and demanded admittance to the Castle in the name of its lawful sovereign, King Edward.

The drawbridge was immediately lowered, the portcullis raised, and the monarch's face brightened when he looked up and saw the windows crowded with ladies, and the court-yard lined with a brilliant assemblage, to welcome his arrival. Nothing could exceed the elegance with which Edward acknowledged and returned the compliments of his subjects; it expressed at once his own high pretensions, and his sense of their homage.

Aymer de Clifford led the way to an apartment for the king's private use, where it was supposed he would rest for some time before mingling with the company.

There was no opportunity for question or explanation; but the Earl of Warwick looked 'unutterable things,' and hoped that the point in this ceremonial was at hand when the eldest son should appear. The feast was laid, the summons had gone forth to warn the guests, the monarch entered the banqueting-hall, but still the younger son played the elder's part; and whether he did the honours well or ill, Warwick never paused to observe, so much was he lost in wonder at this unaccountable mystery. The banquet proceeded, all seemed gaiety; no allusion was made to the absent—no acknowledgment that there

was any representative of the family of De Clifford, except him who now sat before them.

Few could have sustained the part Lady De Clifford had to act that day, or have succeeded so well in making those who beheld her believe that she looked with pride and satisfaction on the magnificence and apparent enjoyment around her. The recollection of the absent came over the minds of those who were acquainted with the domestic circumstances of the family; but an impenetrable veil of mystery was assiduously drawn over the whole affair, and no one could venture to ask a question on the subject. The entertainment, lengthened out as it was by an elaborate display of the ingenuity of *artistes*, in the various accomplishments of gastronomy, substantial and artificial, musicians and jesters, filling up the pauses in the feast, was at last concluded, and Edward, resolved on buying 'golden opinions,' was studiously temperate, though it was by no means his habitual practice; he rose from the board at an early hour. The Earl of Warwick seized the first opportunity of a moment's private conversation with his noble kinswoman; and placing himself near her, said in a low tone of voice,—

'What in the name of wonder has become of your other son?'

She placed her finger on her lips, while her sudden change of countenance betrayed her agitation. 'I beseech you ask no questions now,' she said hastily; 'I feel thankful that so much of this day is gone. Do me the great favour to seem unconcerned about the matter; it may pass without any observation from the king, who, I suppose, has not taken the pains to inquire into our domestic constitution.'

'I assure you, madam,' said the Earl, 'he is better acquainted with such matters than you imagine; his hawk's eye is everywhere, and his keen observation is little sus-

pected by those who see him only in his light and condescending moods.'

'Unfortunate boy!' apostrophised the Countess, as her thoughts wandered to her absent son; but at that moment she noticed the king laying his hand on Howard's harp, and immediately rose to watch the result.

'An instrument like this bespeaks no mean performer, if I mistake not,' observed Edward. 'Perhaps your ladyship will aid me in discovering where a successful application may be made for melody,' he added, turning to Lady Clifford, who was now standing near him. The Countess fixed immediately upon Maude de Wilton, and Gerald de Courcy was deputed to communicate to her the information that royal ears longed to have the felicity of hearing her syren voice. The Lady Maude was unprepared for such a request, and blushed, and begged to have a substitute, but none was to be found, and she rose to obey; her hands trembled as she touched the strings, and she said, 'I shall do but wretched justice to this, in comparison to the tones of which it is wont to be made productive.'

'And who owns this favoured harp,' inquired the King, 'whose powers are so sweetly eulogized?'

'It is Lord de Clifford's,' said the unconscious girl.

'Lord de Clifford!' repeated the monarch, looking round for Aymer, who was in a distant part of the room, and who had never played a tune in his life. Those trifling hints were very provoking to the Countess, who every moment dreaded an exposure of her secret.

'Lady Maude, pray do not keep us in suspense,' she said; and the young lady commenced her performance. The ice thus broken, a group was formed round the fair musician, and others were afterwards prevailed upon to exert their talents. The king cared very little about the music, his only object was to make himself agreeable;

but he longed for the hour of retiring. He was rather fatigued by his journey, he did not feel at ease, under the impression that there was some disguise practised notwithstanding all the outward show of hospitality; and bending over a *voide* of perfumes which stood on a slab of marble beside him, he said to the Earl of Warwick, in a manner that he alone understood,—

‘Can you read riddles, my lord?’

He did not look for a reply, but appeared instantly engaged in listening to the sounds of the harp, and professed himself enchanted with a song which had just been concluded. The envy of an admiring circle, he was glad when the time arrived that gave him the privilege of retiring. Custom made the hour of rest much earlier than ours; but the same rule applied to the morning, and those who breakfasted at seven supped at four, and were taking their ‘liveries’¹ in bed at nine; had endured as long a day of anxious care, or enjoyed as many hours of waking satisfaction as their degenerate successors, who turn night into day, and day into night.

The king wished to have some private conversation with the Earl of Warwick, who was to occupy an adjoining apartment; and Edward performed what was to him the most agreeable courtesy of the evening, when he bowed to the company and took his leave.

¹ Note G.

CHAPTER IX.

EDWARD PLANTAGENET is sometimes fatigued with playing the part of the King of England,' observed the king, as he stretched himself on a couch; 'did we get on tolerably well to-day, fair sir?'

'Your highness does always well, whether in the peaceful hall, or in the battle-field,' answered the courtier.

'Well worded, my lord,' said Edward; 'but our course has often been more straight in the latter than in the former.' He desired the Earl to draw the bolt across the door, and then resumed.

'I have felt less than usual at my ease in this place; there seems some mystery transacting that I am unable to penetrate. I looked around in vain for the object of your description. I only beheld a young man, commonplace enough in all respects. I look to you, my lord, for some explanation.'

'I have none to offer, sire,' said Warwick. 'As I said, when your grace expressed surprise at some of the preliminary arrangements, I must now again repeat, I am not conversant with Lady de Clifford's plans, nor have I had very late accounts of the state of her household.'

'You are aware, however, that her ladyship has two sons,' observed Edward. 'I thought you fully expected to meet them both at Clifford Castle.'

'I took it for granted,' replied the Earl. 'But it seems Lord de Clifford is not at home; your grace saw but the younger son.'

'You say so?' cried the king, as he started to his feet. 'I thought matters were not quite smooth; how is this to be accounted for?'

'I know not,' answered the Earl; 'mayhap the young man is at a distance.'

'If he be not without the bounds of England, there was time enough for his return before to-day,' said Edward, 'if he willed it. But perhaps my passing sojourn at his ancestral stronghold was not sufficiently important to induce such an exertion.' This was said with an expression of irony that his auditor fully understood.

'The lady, however,' observed the Earl, 'cannot be held answerable for her son's conduct, construe it as we may.'

'Construe it, ay, 'tis not difficult to construe it,' muttered Edward.

The Earl of Warwick listened to the petulant remarks of the king with great coolness. He knew his own power, he felt that he had a right to be listened to in his turn. Edward was well aware that the Earl's influence and exertions had placed him on the throne, and that he had acquired a right to reason with him; yet the monarch was not always capable of prudential self-control.

'My kinswoman,' said Warwick, with an emphasis that had in it a peculiar meaning, and which had its due effect in calming the incipient turbulence of Edward's manner—'my kinswoman has as yet a peculiar right to the government of her castle, as I think I must have already explained to your highness. It will be confessed that she has done her endeavour to bestow on your reception all possible honour.'

'His kinswoman, ay, I must repay his services by devotion to all he is pleased to call his,' was the thought that

naturally crossed the mind of the youthful sovereign. It had the effect of subduing him, and he replied, 'She has done so, Neville, and into the peculiar features of her domestic matters we should never dream of entering, but that we are haunted with the recollection that the family have been of old Lancastrians.'

'Their present voluntary allegiance to your highness is not to be slighted, however,' observed the Earl of Warwick; 'even should the prejudices of his father's family have descended to the heir with their possessions, you have secured the devotion of the lady, which is no small advantage. But after all, I cannot imagine any possibility of rivalry at this time. Henry is entirely in your power, and the queen's last resource is exhausted.'

'With all you say, Neville, I must even confess to you, that while the lioness Margaret lives, and is at liberty, I do not feel my throne in complete security,' said King Edward.

'The Princess of Anjou can never regain her lost credit; and it is probable, that if in existence, she is at this moment without the shelter of a roof, sire.'

'I shall expect to see her rise, even as the fabled Phœnix from her ashes,' said the king.

'I cannot sympathise in these gloomy anticipations,' resumed the Earl; 'but it is well to be prepared for the worst, and I may be permitted to observe, that the adherence of the younger De Clifford is by no means indifferent. He will inherit, through his mother, property of considerable extent, altogether independent of his brother.'

'I fancy it will not be difficult to secure his good-will,' remarked the king; 'we shall have him to court. Have I ought else to study? for we travel betimes to-morrow.'

'Is it for me to prescribe to my sovereign?' asked Warwick, with well-assumed humility; for he saw he had made on Edward the desired impression.

'A friend's advice is at all times valuable,' said the monarch, who in his turn saw fit to school his pride into the use of conciliatory language. 'It waxes late, my lord, I shall not detain you longer; let me be aroused early, for to-night I want no further attendance.'

The Earl's apartment communicated with the king's by a short passage leading through an inner door, each having separate access to the main passage. Edward was not solicitous about the fastening of the door leading to the Earl's chamber; but as soon as he was left alone, he carefully examined the bolt on the other, and ascertained for himself its sufficiency. He could not be branded with cowardice; he had proved his personal courage on many occasions; but it was not surprising if the monarch felt some uneasiness, as busy fancy wrought up his mind this night in the solitude of his chamber. In open war his rival had been subdued; secret revenge might overtake him in his most unguarded moments. A blazing fire sent up its sparkling flames to the ample chimney; the light of it shone through the whole apartment, and spread around an air of comfort and cheerfulness. It conveyed no such sensations to the mind of the king, as he leaned thoughtfully against the massive carved mantelpiece. 'Inveterate Lancastrians they ever were,' he muttered. He walked to the window, pulled aside the curtain, and looked for some moments on the scene without. The moonbeams shed their light on the hoary battlements; and directly under his window there paced a solitary warder. He let the curtain drop again, and proceeded to examine minutely the walls of his chamber; he was satisfied at last that there was no other aperture save those with which he was already acquainted. Lastly, he drew his sword, and laid it beside his pillow, while he endeavoured to lull himself to repose; but the spectre of suspicion still haunted his brain,—he thought of the Earl de Clifford's unaccountable absence, and the last flickering

ember had expired on the hearth, ere slumber closed the eyes of the monarch.

The Earl of Warwick was early on foot; and when he entered the king's apartment, he found him fast asleep.

The Earl stood for a moment by the bedside, and could not refrain from smiling when he observed the ready weapon that lay unsheathed, and contrasted it with the nerveless hand that was motionless beside it. A Christian moralist would have reflected, 'So is all the security of man, while he places his trust on an arm of flesh.' We do not suppose that the Earl of Warwick pursued this train of thought; but he had not much time to ruminate, for the king awoke suddenly, and started, at first, as he beheld the figure that stood so near him. It was only instantaneous, for he immediately smiled, on recognising the features of his warrior friend.

'Hah! Neville, you are early astir this morning,' was his first remark.

'My liege,' said the Earl, 'tis fit your servants should be in readiness to execute your commands. Has your highness rested?'

'Indifferently well,' replied the king carelessly, as he glanced at his sword, and was sorry it had been observed. 'You see how difficult it is to conquer the habits of the camp. But we must be equipped for the road.'

Edward proceeded to make his toilet, and a feeling of security and confidence came to his relief, as he again looked into the court, and saw his own small and chosen band of brave and trusty followers.

A morning repast was served up for the king in private, after which, with many courteous expressions, he bade adieu to his noble entertainers, and to Clifford Castle. As they were in the act of departing, Lady de Clifford contrived to ask the Earl of Warwick if the king was really aware of her son's absence. He gave her to under-

stand that it had been observed and commented on; but there was no opportunity then for further parley.

A number of the guests who had been assembled for the occasion, left the Castle that same day, and the rest soon followed, for no encouragement was given to any one to remain. While she had so prominent a part to act, Lady de Clifford's high spirit had helped her to stifle her feelings, or at least to conceal them; but when the excitement was over, and the mind was turned in upon itself, she became indifferent to the scenes that were passing around, and soured to the world at large. What had she gained by the step she had taken? A day and a night of ostentatious display, repaid by unmeaning words of flattery, and to be followed by years of anxious boding; but as her guests left her to her own reflections, we must for a time do the same.

CHAPTER X.

ABOUT two years of comparative peace passed over England; yet, even then, a cloud was gathering on the political horizon, and its existence was manifested by occasional partial storms. A consort was proposed for Edward; and the Princess Bona of Savoy having been selected, the Earl of Warwick was deputed to carry on the negotiation. The king had, however, placed his affections on Elizabeth Woodville, the widow of Sir John Grey de Groby, who lost his life in the service of the house of Lancaster.

A match so far beneath the dignity of the crown was generally disagreeable to the English nobility; but the monarch married the beautiful widow without consulting them, and soon afterwards proclaimed his marriage publicly. The Earl of Warwick was deeply offended; but an outward show of cordiality was kept up between himself and the court. It is not improbable, that when the king found himself firmly established, he might have looked with some jealousy on the extensive influence of the Earl, which was now so far from being serviceable, that it seemed in some degree to subtract from his own, and the queen never regarded him with complacency. Warwick did not withdraw himself entirely from the court for a long time after the king's marriage; but at length he retired to one of his country residences; and his evident

displeasure and disgust led many to fear that Edward had aroused a spirit he could not easily lay. Secret anxieties prompted the more zealous adherents of the king to strengthen the bonds which united them together, and to use their influence in drawing to their cause such as appeared, from whatever reasons, to occupy neutral ground.

Up to this period the Pierreponts lived apart from public affairs; and, ignorant of the secret springs which were at work, it appeared to them that all went on smoothly in high places. There was little variation in Julia's mode of life; she was a frequent and welcome visitor of the poor, trying to soothe the sufferings of infancy, or comforting the aged and the lonely. She spoke to them the heart-touching words of inspiration, and thus, without seeming to be a teacher, she taught, while in the holy truths that flowed from her lips, the listeners saw and feared no heresy. It was with a caution suited to her day and generation Julia conveyed her sacred lessons; and desiring and seeking to devote her every gift to the one great end of existence, she received strength and wisdom for using her opportunities. Her brother often talked of entering more into society, and she was rather astonished at his remaining so long contented with so very limited a circle as that in which they moved.

The third year since De Clifford's departure had nearly run its course, when one day an elderly gentleman, but still apparently full of life and vigour, entered the grounds of Pierrepont Manor, followed by a single domestic. He rode slowly along, looking upon the objects around, as a man will do, who, after a long absence, recognises scenes which were once familiar. He announced himself as Sir George Villiers, and will be remembered by the reader as that relative to whom Reginald de la Pole had looked in vain for interesting himself in the Pierreponts. From

the time they had left Ashley they had scarcely heard of Sir George, and his name was connected with one of the most painful events of their lives. Why he now sought them out shall be shortly explained.

Sir George Villiers was a courtier, who had spared no pains to ingratiate himself with the reigning monarch. He did sometimes think of his kinsman's children, and the idea of renewing his acquaintance at Pierrepont Manor might now and then come athwart his mind; but it was quickly dismissed with a conscious feeling of his former neglect, and of the awkwardness of making the first advance after a lapse of so many years. But now the sapient were looking to the future with some uneasiness, as the breach between the monarch and his powerful subject, the Earl of Warwick, became palpable. In the event of popular commotion, every adherent of influence would be a valuable acquisition, and why should young Pierrepont be suffered to continue in comparative obscurity? As long as his influence was not required, he might be suffered to enjoy life in his own fashion; but it occurred to Sir George Villiers, that while his young relation would be an acceptable addition to the train of Edward, the merit of his adherence might reflect advantageously on himself. He did not know if Pierrepont was attached to any party; if he was, it could only be in theory, and at his age there was little doubt of his becoming speedily riveted to the fortunes of a king like Edward, did he but see his splendour, and experience his courtesy. There was no time to be lost, as, should any outbreak take place in the interval, Henry might have discernment enough to suspect that interested motives prompted the unwonted notice of his relative. Sir George Villiers had then resolved on this, his first visit to his young kinsman, with the view of inducing him to go to London, and be introduced at court; he was too much a man of the world to

lay bare his scheme to his inexperienced kinsman ; besides, he felt a little awkward, although he strove to conceal it, and put forth many ingenious reasons for his long delayed attentions ; indeed, he made it apparent that he had come at last, at great personal inconvenience, so great was his anxiety to pave the way for a visit from his young friends at his house in London.

His reception at first was rather cold ; but it was not difficult to melt Henry, especially towards a guest. He did think he should like to have a peep at the great world ; and Sir George left the Manor well satisfied with the result of his visit.

Henry tried to believe that Sir George had been reproaching himself for his former neglect, and now wished to atone for it by an effort of friendship. At all events he was much inclined to profit by his present advance, and the knight hinted that it was not improbable the king might confer on Henry, without delay, the title his forefathers had borne. This was too much to expect without service performed, and the youth, in his simplicity, fancied that he might amuse himself with a sight of courtly splendour without attaching himself entirely to the interest of Edward. There were considerations that rendered him unwilling to do that, at least at present ; his inexperience rendered him confident in himself, and he resolved to accept his relative's invitation to meet him in London in a fortnight's time.

After Sir George Villiers' departure, Julia endeavoured to say a warning word to her brother. He rallied her on her anxiety, observed that he had no need of Sir George's patronage, and by way of comforting her, assured her he would take no person's advice. She much doubted the extent of his own prudence, and saw him depart with a heavy heart.

Young Pierrepont once in the centre of attraction, gave

himself up with all his heart to the delights of a gay life. All was new, and he became so involved in the giddy maze, that the utmost time he had limited for his stay was gone before he was aware. His reception at court was as flattering as he could desire; and although he had as yet seen no battle-field on which to earn it, he soon found himself, by the courtesy and policy of royalty, bearing the knightly title that had distinguished so many of his predecessors. This was in itself gratifying to his youthful feelings, and it could not be doubted that he would claim its confirmation by such service as he should be called upon to render; but of future times and consequences he thought little. As might have been anticipated, he was quickly fascinated by the king, and charmed with the beauty of the queen. Day after day, and night after night, glided away, and still some engagement presented itself, till he began to fancy he should see no end to them if his stay was lengthened out to months.

A severe headache, the effect of the new kind of life he was leading, was the first thing that led him to think seriously of home. He must break away; but how!—tomorrow, the next day, and the next, presented claims on his time; so that the resuscitating effects of a night's rest disposed him to tarry a little longer. But a similar cause led in a few days to a corresponding result, and he made up his mind to leave town immediately.

Once on the road, Henry's motions were rapid enough, and he soon arrived at the Manor. He looked ill, for he had been unaccustomed to dissipation of any sort, and the sallow hue his countenance now wore, seemed to his anxious sister to be caused by illness; but when she expressed herself to this effect, he laughed and assured her that he had enjoyed London exceedingly.

Henry had much to say of the scenes he had seen, and of the persons he had met; but Julia heard nothing which

led her to fear that anything had occurred which bore a political complexion. Perhaps she could not very well define to herself the nature of those fears that haunted her respecting her brother's entrance into public life, for it was not reasonable to suppose that he would continue satisfied without mixing with his own compeers on the busy stage of human existence, nor did she consider it desirable that he should; yet his evident delight with the court was a source of anxiety to her. Then the singular link in her own destiny, which led her to dwell in thought on a future period, through the uncertainty of which even conjecture could not penetrate, made her fear what she could scarcely express, and had no desire to reveal.

Henry soon returned to London, and Lady Villiers at length paid a visit to the Manor. Much was spoken of her wish to have Julia for her guest; and she, though glad to embrace every excuse for delay, pressed on all hands, found herself at last constrained to accompany her brother to the metropolis. It was under very different feelings they left their home. Henry had not lost his keen relish for gay life; his sister had never acquired it, and she dreaded the experiment she was about to make. Blondel accompanied them, and they reached the great city in all safety.

It was early in the year 1469; and London in those days, although very different from the wondrous London of the present time, received the tribute of the stranger's admiration and surprise much as it now does from every new beholder. No doubt, the extensive gardens and vineyards which covered the ground now occupied by the centre of the city, were looked upon, in their day, with as much complacency by the public, as are the Zoological and Botanical Gardens of the nineteenth century. There was old Southwark Church—old even then, and the

Temple, Westminster Abbey, the Tower, old St. Paul's, and other places of note, since swept away.

The court of Edward the Fourth outshone all that had been seen, in magnificence, since the halcyon days of the third Edward, who had for his guests at one time two captive kings, and for his poet laureate the renowned Geoffrey Chaucer, while a chivalrous train of knights and ladies gay adorned his state.

Julia Pierrepont soon found herself involved in the mazes of fashionable life, and she could scarcely conceive herself placed in a position more hostile to her comfort or advantage. The torrent of folly swept onward, she trembled to find herself in such a stream. Her brother was disappointed,—he wished to see her an object of attraction; he wanted her to feel and own the pleasure of moving in the magic circle of King Edward's court. He was chagrined to observe that she looked unhappy, and contrived to withdraw herself into the least observable corners. She had yielded as much as she could, and more than she ought, of her own convictions of right to please him; and she was dissatisfied with herself, while the measure of his expectations was very far from being realized.

Julia felt the due penalty of consenting to tread in the path of the worldly; she lost that composure of spirit she had once enjoyed, even in the midst of trial. She found that she could not put away at night, with her daily garments, that dissipation of mind inseparable from the scenes in which she moved; and she took herself seriously to task. There was no way for safety, but in making a more decided stand on the ground of her own conscientious scruples; but it was difficult, very difficult. Her objections would not even be laid to the account of religion, properly so called. It were a resolution to be commended and applauded should she retire to a nunnery. Such a step had its own eclat; and the poor trembling heart which

saw the convént door closed between it and the outward objects on which it doted, carried enough of the world into the solitary cell, to enable its fair possessor to dream of the kind thoughts that dwelt on her whose place at the domestic hearth was now vacant. Yes, enough of the world to be soothed by the knowledge that those from whom she had parted, would say and believe that sister Theresa was too pure to live among them. She had left the mirthful song for the sound of the vesper bell. She had exchanged her costly gems for the veil, her childhood's home for the cell where she weekly scourged herself as she slowly repeated the *miserere*. Was not there vanity, too, in that little heart to whisper that admiring eyes had rested on her brow, as, in the midst of a gazing crowd, she had laid aside her gay attire, and donned the sombre vestments of her assumed order? Ah! yes; it is not grated windows, high walls, bolted doors, or sable vestments, that can change the heart. The Christian flies not from the post where in providence he has been placed; but the new spirit that he has received makes him ask for strength therein to walk and work. But the high-born and the beautiful, under the influence of feelings, varied and contradictory, sought the shelter of a nunnery; and it would have been nothing new or wonderful in the eyes of her friends did Julia Pierrepoint do the same.

That she should be tainted by lollardism was quite another thing; she did not forget, that with the imputation of heresy, danger walked hand in hand. But convictions like hers were not to be longer tampered with, and she saw that the more she yielded to the world, the more it demanded of her.

She earnestly longed to leave London, but she knew her brother would not consent to go for at least ten days more. It was not a very long time; but at present it appeared so to her.

Many a thought she sent towards Ashley, as on the following morning she sat alone, striving to regain that sweet composure of mind she had there learned to prize. She wished and she longed for counsel; but she felt that she should scarcely have desired her dear simple Christian friends to know the lengths she had been tempted to go, in compliance with the customs of a society from which they would have expected her to stand apart. When she remembered this, it gave her a very low view of herself,—a deeper insight than before into the unfathomed recesses of a deceitful heart. She had once thought it impossible to have been thus enticed; she now saw the fallacy of this opinion. It was a bitter lesson, but it was salutary, and led to good and speedy results.

Julia could justly plead fatigue for declining to go out that day, and she spent the greater part of it in her own room. The solitary hours were profitable and refreshing, though the din and noise of a London street were less pleasing sounds to her than the chirp of the birds, and the other rural sounds which broke the stillness of such hours at the Manor. But she was enjoying the fruits of a renewed resolve to walk more circumspectly, and to be more diligent in 'redeeming the time.'

CHAPTER XI.

SHE had been seated for some time alone, when her maid entered to say that Blondel wished particularly to see her; and having received permission, the page speedily made his appearance.

‘Has anything happened, Blondel?’ inquired his mistress.

‘I have something to mention, madam,’ he answered.

‘Let me hear it,’ she said.

‘Last night,’ he answered, ‘Sir Henry not requiring my attendance, I took an opportunity the spare time afforded to look at such parts of the city as I had not before seen. I was passing through a narrow lane, when I fancied I heard something like music. I stopped to listen, and although the sound was not very distinct, it seemed like a hymn tune I have heard at home. There was no light to be seen but my own small lantern, and I shaded it a moment with my hand, when a faint glimmer became visible from the chinks of an upper window just opposite where I stood. The lower part of the house did not appear to be inhabited, neither did the adjoining one, and on the other side there was a vacant space, so that altogether it seemed very solitary.’ He paused to observe how far his lady was interested, and was desired to go on.

‘I thought there might be a party of gossellers collected together; as I had heard they are used to do in large places.

I longed to be among them ; but no stranger like me could likely gain admittance, and I was resolved to wait in the neighbourhood to see if they would soon disperse. It was not long before I heard the sound of footsteps within the house, but so cautious that they would not have been noticed by one who was not listening. The worship was just concluded, and the inside fastenings of the street door being removed, it was slowly opened, and some person looked out ; he did not observe me, and, stepping back, I suppose he gave warning that the way was clear, for presently a number of people began to come out, and I was then quite certain I was right in my conjecture ; but I longed to speak to some.'

'And did you not venture?' asked Julia.

'I did, madam ; I joined one of the groups, and after going along with them a few paces, I ventured to ask if they had been at worship. The man to whom I spoke started at the question, and eyed me very suspiciously. I assured him he need have no fear of me if he was a Wycliffite, as I had reason to think he was ; but he still looked at me doubtfully.'

'And you could not get any intelligence, then?' said his mistress, interrupting him, anxiously.

'Yes, I did, madam,' he resumed ; 'I told him the simple truth, that I was from the country, and a stranger in London, and was led to the place solely by curiosity. I said that I had heard them singing ; and had I thought they would have let me in, that I should have been among them, for that I too was a humble member of the sect to which I believed he belonged.'

'That was a bold avowal,' observed Julia, 'and on such slender grounds scarcely a prudent one ; yet I am willing to believe you ready to risk more than this.'

'I was sure there was no danger,' said Blondel, colouring ; 'otherwise, I do not know that I should have said so.'

I could not be deceived ; there was something, I know not what, that assured me I was safe. And so it proved ; for he turned round, and holding out his hand, said, "I give you the right hand of fellowship, young man, on the faith of your own statement. If you have deceived me, the sin is great ; but I hope and believe better things ; you do not look like an impostor, and I wish you had been with us this night, and had tasted of our privileges."

'I asked him if I might come to join them on a future day. He said I might ; but he advised me to be cautious how I addressed strangers in this city. He said we were close to the more crowded thoroughfares, and that they made a point of separating from each other, to avoid the appearance of a dispersing congregation ; but that I might come again on Tuesday evening next, when they hoped to meet at the same place and hour. He said he would keep the door on purpose to receive me, for that they admitted no strangers without precaution. "Meantime, friend," he added, "it is but fair I should know the name of one who has watched our motions as you have done." I told him my name, and where I lived at present ; but I took care not to mention Sir Henry's name or yours, madam, and he left me without giving any information about himself.'

'This is a strange adventure of yours, Blondel,' said his mistress ; 'but do you think you could find that curious place again?'

'I am sure I could ; for whenever I was left to myself, I stood still and marked every object, that I might know it ; after which I returned to the very spot where my attention had been first arrested, so that I could find it by day or by night. But to make surer still, I went back early this morning ; for I thought that perhaps—'

Blondel had been unusually loquacious ; he now hesitated. Julia saved him finishing his sentence ; she said,

'I dare say I can fathom your thoughts, Blondel; you thought I should like to join the little band of worshippers.'

'I did, madam,' answered the page, delighted; 'but I fear when you hear that the place is distant, and on many accounts can only be approached on foot, you will not like it.'

'I have no difficulty in making up my mind on the subject,' she said. 'I think I may depend upon Rachel, and shall also take her; but it is in the meantime best that you do not mention a syllable of this to any one.' Blondel retired, and Julia's mind was furnished with a new subject for thought.

The day on which the meeting was to be held was fortunately the same appointed for a masquerade; therefore much difficulty was removed, for Julia could not be missed. Though she had been at first urged to accompany her cousins, her steady and decided refusal had subsequently obtained for her the privilege of being left to the pleasure of her own will, not without many expressions of surprise on the part of the Villierses. 'It was very droll,' they said. 'Julia Pierrepont was a most extraordinary girl!'

Early in the evening there was a busy scene of preparation for the masking; and Julia, glad of so favourable an opportunity, dressed as simply as she could, and wearing a large dark mantle, proceeded to the meeting, accompanied by Rachel, and closely preceded by Blondel. She met some of the nummers by the way, and rejoiced that she was not among them.

She stepped on fearlessly, to Blondel's great comfort, who was every now and then casting an anxious look behind.

When they left the more frequented thoroughfares, which were lighted with lanterns,¹ and entered a dark and narrow lane, Julia felt uncomfortable, but she was sure her

¹ Note H.

pilot would not proceed so confidently if he was not certain of his ground.

The way took a second turn, and after walking onwards a few minutes, Blondel announced that they had arrived at their destination. They were just in time, for the congregation were beginning to arrive. The small party stood back a little, and Blondel concealed the light he carried, while they observed an individual apply a key to the lock of the door close beside them; he also carried a lantern, but it was a dark one. He went in to prepare the lights, while another took his station at the door. Blondel drew near, and found that it was his acquaintance of the former night. They had a short and almost silent greeting, and the Wycliffite desired him to pass in with his companions.

Since Julia left Ashley she had not had an opportunity of uniting with so large a congregation. On this evening the 'upper room' was pretty well filled; and in a temporary kind of pulpit at the farther end, stood a man of venerable aspect, who, after prayer and praise, addressed his auditory from these words: 'Be not conformed to this world.'¹ He bore in remembrance that he saw before him individuals out of various families, who had come out from the midst of the idolatries of popery, and he bore them in affectionate consideration. He spoke also for a short time from another text: 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house: so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord; and worship thou Him.'²

The entire subject of the evening's exhortations was peculiarly suited to Julia's circumstances. How greatly she had longed for words of Christian counsel! how little she had expected to hear them! This was a privilege,

¹ Rom. xii. 2.

² Ps. xlv. 10, 11.

added to many mercies, of which she felt herself unworthy, and she was overwhelmed with a painful feeling that she had of late been lowering her Christian standard. She had not, after all, lost by her journey to London, for it gave her a deeper insight than ever into her heart, and a new proof of the watchful care of the good Shepherd; and when she heard another service announced for that day week, she could have wished her stay prolonged in London for a few days that she might again be a listener. The preacher spoke of a sojourn in other lands, and of his having been induced, from love to the brethren, to venture back to England to learn the case of his countrymen, and to labour among them. Danger was on every hand; but he was willing not only to be bound, but to die for his Master's cause. Julia was sorry when the service was concluded, and very thankful for the admonition and advice she had shared with others. She returned to her temporary home long before the revellers had left their masking. When on her way back, she observed to Blondel that she should like to know the preacher's name. 'His name, madam, is Risby, as I am told,' said the page; but it was a name with which Julia was unacquainted.

When the family assembled on the following day, it was evident that they were worn out by their enjoyments. Julia, on the contrary, was looking, as her brother thought, better than usual. They happened to be together alone for a few minutes before the other members of the family had left their respective rooms.

'Why, you look quite gay this morning, after a nice long nap, sister mine,' observed Henry.

'I am well,' she said; 'which I scarcely think you are.'

'Oh!' cried he with a yawn, and throwing himself on a seat, 'mumming and funning are mighty fine things in their way; but, Julia, I am dreadfully wearied. But I do wish you had not such very serious objections to staying

a little longer here. Sir George has pressed me so much to remain one week more,—it will soon pass.' He was surprised by her ready acquiescence; but she laid her hand on his arm, and the tears stood in her eyes, as she repeated, 'It will soon pass, Henry; what are you doing with this precious time?' He felt the appeal, but was silent.

It was then arranged that Sir Henry and his sister were to prolong their stay, and she looked forward to the hope of being present at Tuesday's service. There was one awkward circumstance. Henry had determined to send Blondel home some days before on business, and she should not have him to guide the way, and be a protection; there was none other she could, or would trust, but Rachel. She resolved to take an opportunity of viewing the locality by daylight: she would not certainly abandon her design without an effort. Should the Villierses not be from home on the evening in question, they would not be surprised at her absence from the family circle, as she might be expected to be engaged in some preparations for her departure on the following morning; and, altogether, she was sanguine in the hope of making out her point. The day at length arrived, and Julia gave its hours to the society of her cousins, with the view of being excused in the evening. She scarcely saw her brother; but she believed he would have many engagements, and she was not surprised. When he did come in, late in the day, he seemed unusually excited, and rather absent, but he tried to conceal it. He told his sister that he had an appointment in the evening, which would probably prevent his seeing her any more that night.

Julia had no idea how her brother had been engaged; but the important transactions of that day had a marked influence on her own history, as well as on his. Sir George Villiers had his reasons for wishing to detain Henry Pierre-

point in London. He had succeeded in his scheme of introducing his young kinsman at the court of Edward the Fourth; he saw with pleasure that Henry was entirely captivated. The politic measure of conferring upon him the degree of knighthood, which he had done nothing to merit, seemed virtually to pledge him to adhere to the Yorkist; his honour, though not his word, was surely engaged to the monarch. But Sir George was not satisfied until he should see him actually bound to his party by a solemn engagement, from which he could not depart. Rumours were thickening that made the king anxious to ascertain his strength; he well knew that many fluttered around him, upon whose fidelity he could not depend in times of peril. The news of his brother the Duke of Clarence's marriage to the eldest daughter of the Earl of Warwick, had just reached him, and notwithstanding of his unwillingness to be aroused from the dream of complete security in which he had been so long indulging, he could not but have many uneasy thoughts. It was suggested that he should appoint an early day, to afford his friends an opportunity of professing their attachment to his person.

There could not be a better opportunity of securing Henry Pierrepont; but his kinsman, observing that he was much guided by impulse, persuaded himself that it was better not to disclose to him the position of affairs till everything had been arranged. Sir George assured his friends that Pierrepont would join them formally on the day of meeting. So far all went smoothly; but there was still a little difficulty in the way, which the courtier, with all his sagacity, had not anticipated. Henry was very jealous of dictation, and that which he might have done of his own accord, seemed to have some objection attached to it when urged upon him by another. With all Sir George's address, it still appeared that he was assuming a control over his actions, when, taking him into a private

room on the previous evening, he told him of the proposed gathering of King Edward's supporters at the Tower on the morrow, and laid before him the propriety of his making one of the number. Henry would perhaps have been offended at any person who should have insinuated a doubt of his allegiance to the king; but he was annoyed at the abrupt manner in which the present intimation was conveyed to him, and of this he soon made his relation aware; but, after a little explanation, he consented to accompany Sir George Villiers to the Tower, who had the pleasure of seeing him, then and there, bound to the cause of the house of York, by a tie that could not in honour be broken.

CHAPTER XII.



WHEN the hour appointed for the meeting approached, Julia's mind was full of anxious thought. The idea of going to such a distant part of the city, with no companion but her maid, and at a late hour, made her almost hesitate. She had every confidence in Rachel's attachment, but not much in her judgment. She had carefully instructed her in the doctrines of the Bible, and she professed herself a disciple of Wycliffe; but no trial had as yet proved the solidity of her foundation. As these things passed through Julia's mind, she wavered a little; but her heart longed for the precious opportunity, and she blamed herself for leaning so much to circumstances, and so little to the unfailing help. She looked at the hour, and warned Rachel that it was time to go.

Her courage rose as she looked out on a firmament so clear, that even in a London atmosphere the stars sparkled, and the moon shone splendidly. Their soft light seemed to promise protection; she was quite sure she knew the way, and as she stepped over the threshold her timidity vanished. She told Rachel to keep close by her, and to fear nothing, and walked briskly on to the place of meeting. She was rather early, and they walked up and down the solitary street once or twice before they saw any person approach. The first individual that appeared was muffled

up in a large cloak ; Julia supposed him to be the bearer of the key, and quickened her pace to gain admittance. Instead, however, of pausing at the door, he passed over to the other side, and turned a dark corner. She was rather agitated, but made no remark to her companion, and in a few minutes she was relieved by the people beginning to arrive. She passed in among them, and when the doors were fastened, and the service had commenced, she felt a sweet composure of spirit that shed, for the time, its soothing influence over every difficulty. In casting her eyes over the congregation, it struck her, that among them she observed the muffled figure that had passed her in the street. This was not surprising, and she did not know why she should remark him. Her observation was but momentary, for her attention was soon riveted by the service. The preacher was the same venerable man she had heard on a former occasion, and his simple but touching eloquence flowed as then—travelling direct from the heart to the heart. He had been speaking about half an hour, when an individual stepped noiselessly up to where he stood and whispered something in his ear. He came in so quietly that Julia did not hear the door of the apartment open, and was not aware of his presence till he stood by the preacher. The old man passed his hand over his brow and looked beseechingly upwards, while he paused a moment ; then addressing himself to his hearers, he said that he was obliged to conclude rather abruptly. He proceeded rapidly to make one or two practical remarks ; his closing words were peculiarly solemn, and such as befitted one who addressed an assembly like this, probably for the last time.

‘My dear friends,’ he said, ‘it is now my duty to tell you, that there is reason to believe our retreat has been discovered, and that we are betrayed. It is under this impression I take my leave so soon ; we are about to dis-

perse considerably earlier than usual, in order to counteract the malice of those who watch for our lives. I trust our notice has come in sufficient time to enable you all to reach your abodes in safety, where I beseech you to study the precept: "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."¹ I detain you not; I go out myself like the patriarch of old, not knowing whither; but the Star of Jacob is my guide, and I fearlessly follow that blessed light. Brethren, pray for me, as I do, and will, for you. Fare-ye-well.'

A few words of devout prayer closed the service, and one and all hurried out with quick but cautious tread. Julia longed to cling to the protecting arm of a friend, as, unknown to those around her, and fearing to seek protection from any of the strangers among whom she found herself, she stood for a moment at the end of the narrow lane to consider if she was in the right way. She turned in the direction in which she believed she ought to go, and was proceeding onward, glad to be so near a more open street, when again the same individual that had already attracted her observation came up to her from behind. She started instinctively; but the stranger now spoke, and begged she would not be alarmed, as he was just come from the same conventicle she had attended, and having observed that she was unprotected, had followed with the intention of offering his services. She thanked him, but observed that she did not require his attendance, as she knew her way perfectly and would soon be at home. This she stated with apparent confidence, while she trembled with an undefined suspicion of the intruder. He, however, made renewed professions of his anxiety to act as her guide, and insinuated that he thought she was already in a wrong street; but begged again she would not be alarmed, as he had some idea where she was going, and should be happy

¹ Matt. x. 16.

to show her the way. Confused by the singularity of her situation, and still more so by the stranger's apparent knowledge of her destination, which she was not sufficiently collected to call in question, she looked hurriedly around her, and seemed to lose all knowledge of the place where she stood. Rachel clung to her, and besought her to place herself under the gentleman's guidance, while he, on his part, assured her he was going in the same direction, and would not lose sight of her until she was safe within doors. Thus pressed on all hands, she mechanically followed him, and soon had not the least knowledge of the locality wherein she found herself. Soon she noticed the rushing sound of the river, and she knew that she should not have heard it on her way to Sir George Villiers'. The horrible feeling that she was betrayed came over her; but indignation for the moment took the place of fear, and stopping short, she said, 'You have deceived me, and I follow you not a step farther. I know I am near the Thames, which is just the opposite of the way I should have gone. I shall appeal to the first passenger.' Julia's resolution was in vain, for she was in a place where passengers were seldom to be seen at such an hour. She was entirely in the stranger's power, and he quickly gave her to understand that any effort to escape was useless.

'Your resolution is taken too late, lady,' he said with the utmost coolness; 'you are my prisoner!' He gave a long low whistle, and in a few seconds the plash of oars was distinctly heard. Rachel screamed aloud, the feelings of her mistress were too deep to find utterance in noisy exclamation. 'Whatever becomes of me,' she said, 'I stir not a foot farther till you inform me who you are, and what is your design in thus entrapping us.'

'My business is not conversation, lady,' answered the stranger; 'you shall have the information you desire in due time. Resistance is altogether in vain, as you must be

convinced, for here come my comrades, and hard by is a barge into which you must go. I offer no disrespect, but unless you step in of your own accord, you shall be transported otherwise.'

Two other persons were now joined to the party. 'How now,' said one of them, addressing Julia's mysterious conductor; 'where are the rest of our people? You are here an hour sooner than we looked for you.'

'Yes, these sneaking hypocritical gospellers keep a sharp look-out; our people will find their own way. Meantime let us away with such as we have.'

'Oh! that's the way, is it?' said he of the boat; 'and how got you these? A light cargo for our good barge! but "better small fish than no fish," and lollards are lollards; so his grace will be better pleased than if you came altogether empty-handed, though that's the most that can be said. Pray step on board, ma'am; a fine night this for a dance along the Thames, ladies.'

'Hush—a truce to your prating,' said the man in the cloak. 'I'll warrant me your volubility has been cultivated at the alehouse. An' every one let their tongue wag as fast as you, Saltwood had fewer inmates.'

'Saltwood!' echoed Julia, almost unconsciously, for she had heard of the horrors of that loathsome prison. But she restrained a further expression of her feelings, for she knew it would be unavailing, and she resolved to bear herself with what Christian composure she could; for the hint that she caught, explained that she was about to be questioned, in some way, for heresy. She whispered to Rachel an exhortation to cease sobbing, and to say nothing; and the trembling girl followed her into the boat. Her conductor was not a little surprised at the calm manner in which Julia now conformed herself to her circumstances, for he had expected to see her overwhelmed with dismay. She was herself not much less astonished; but it was the

promised strength given in the time of need. The rowers plunged their oars in the tide, and the little bark shot along; but Julia observed that they were going against the stream, and that consequently they could not be bound for Saltwood. It was not long before the skiff was drawn towards the beach, and she was requested to step on shore. Hitherto she had not spoken, but she could not now resist inquiring where they were bringing her, and received for answer, that she was about to have the honour of an interview with his grace the Archbishop of Canterbury.

In a few minutes Julia found herself entering the gate of a large building; she could not doubt she was at the palace of Lambeth, and that she was to be called upon by high authority, for the first time, to give an account of the faith she professed. She put up a silent prayer for aid to enable her to comport herself, so as to bring no discredit upon her profession. She shuddered at the bare idea of being induced by threats, or any other means, to deny one article which she treasured as Scripture truth. She was comforted in reflecting that the treasure being in earthen vessels, the excellency of the power was in higher keeping.¹ Her own weakness signified nothing, if she was kept in the trying hour. The disciples were desired, when brought before governors and kings for the gospel's sake, to take no thought beforehand what they should say, for that an answer would be given them in that same hour.² The ear of Him who made that promise and fulfilled it was not heavy that it could not hear, his hand was not shortened that it could not save.³ He who loved his people, loved them to the end.⁴ These seasonable scriptures had their due effect upon her mind, and she felt a support that perfectly surprised herself. The attendants about the palace seemed to be prepared for arrivals, and she was hurried onwards. After passing through one

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 7. ² Matt. x. 18, 19. ³ Isa. lix. 1. ⁴ John xiii. 1.

or two passages with her guide, she found herself in an antechamber. Here she was left with Rachel, while her conductor passed into an inner room, and was admitted into the presence of the Archbishop, who was anxiously looking for him.

‘Well, Gasper,’ said his grace, ‘how sped your embassy?’

‘Very indifferently, my lord,’ replied the priest, for such he was.

‘What!’ exclaimed the prelate, rising from his chair, ‘you do not mean to say that Risby has escaped your hands?’

‘I am sorry to say we had not the good fortune to lay hands upon him at all,’ said Gasper.

‘How so, I ask you?’ demanded the Archbishop in an imperious tone. ‘Lurked their treachery among you?’

‘No, my lord, we were all zealous for your grace, and holy mother church; but wayward fate so willed it.’

‘Fate!—what mean you by this babbling?’ demanded the discomposed Archbishop.

‘We are not ignorant how Satan can help his own at a pinch,’ responded the priest. ‘These traitorous lollards are sure to keep good watch; they were warned of a design upon them somehow, and dispersed, consequently, before the usual time. I was in the conventicle, and saw a scout creep in and whisper his intelligence; but all I could do was to keep quiet, for I knew none of our people would appear before the expected moment of dispersion.’

‘I would rather have caught that Risby than a dozen others,’ observed the prelate. ‘He is a dangerous man, not to be put down otherwise than by force. He is of sharp wit, and withal hath got a reputation for sanctity among these deluded people—a vile renegade from his colours—a rebellious and contumacious son of the holy mother, in whose lap he obtained all the learning he now

turns to decry her—a graceless ingrate. If I had him, he should send forth no more of his vile calumnies and seditious harangues. Heard you his sermon, Gasper ?’

‘I did, your grace.’

‘And hast notes ?’ added the prelate.

‘Yes, my lord.’

‘Enough, no doubt, to prove to all right-hearted Christians that he deserves death.’

‘Truly, reverend father ; albeit his harangue was cut short by the information that marred our plot, I heard enough to sink a galleon freighted with such heretics as he.’

The Archbishop walked up and down his apartment two or three times, muttering broken sentences of disappointment. Gasper was a zealous functionary, and his services were duly appreciated ; but his grace’s irritability was in the ascendant at present.

The capture of Risby had been a favourite project for some time, and the measures taken on this last occasion were such as seemed to insure success. He had long been a suspected individual, and soon after his return from abroad, his presence in England became known at the archiepiscopal palace, together with the fact of his continuing to preach the condemned doctrines of Wycliffe wherever he could get a congregation assembled. A train was laid for his destruction, and his motions were carefully watched. On this evening it seemed impossible he could escape ; and the prelate was so sure of his capture, that when the priest entered his apartment, he believed it was to announce the agreeable fact that Risby was in safe custody. All the particulars of his subsequent treatment had been arranged. At Lambeth he was first to undergo the ceremony of a trial. If it could be conveniently managed, he was thereafter to suffer publicly at Smithfield ; but should any contingency prevent that,

he was to be removed to Saltwood, where William Thorpe and others had been immured, and whence they came no more out. The discomfiture of his project proved a great disappointment to the dignitary, and was but a sorry preparation for Julia Pierrepont's reception at the palace of Lambeth.

At length the prelate seated himself again, and asked the priest if he had any other intelligence.

'I have brought two prisoners,' he replied.

'Ah! how came that about? I thought the whole scheme was upset.'

'So it was, in a manner, your grace; but, resolved to do something for the good cause, I kept close sight of two females who were at the conventicle. I followed them, and it seems to me that they are strangers, at least in that part of the city; for, at a venture, I told them they were in the wrong road, and offered to show them the right. They became confused, as I expected, and never inquired how I came to know the way they ought to go; and so I succeeded in leading them to where our boat lay, not, however, without exciting the suspicion of one of them, who appears to be a lady, and of a right noble spirit; the other I imagine to be her attendant. They wait your grace's pleasure in the antechamber.'

'Hem,' muttered the Archbishop, whose mind yet reverted to the loss of Risby; 'their case will no doubt be easily put by. I intended to have had Risby to the chapel to-morrow morning, to be confuted and degraded in presence of those who were once his brethren. These you speak of, I fancy we may manage without so much ado.'

'Will it please your grace to have them examined to-night?' inquired Gasper.

'To-night?' repeated the dignitary. 'Let me see—a lady and her attendant, you think they are. It seems strange: yes, I may as well have some talk with them at once. It

may be well to have some knowledge of them by private conference in the first instance; let them be summoned.'

When Julia first found herself in the presence of the Archbishop she trembled excessively; yet by a strong effort of self-command, or rather, by means of aid from above, she was reassured; but poor Rachel, shaking like an aspen leaf, and hiding her face with her hands, stood close behind her, as for shelter.

The prelate took a leisurely survey of his helpless and unwilling guests, without rising from his chair; while the priest stood by, ready to confront them.

'Daughter,' said the Archbishop in measured tones, 'you appear in our presence under such untoward circumstances, as cause us to fear you are a strayed sheep from our holy mother the catholic church. Yet judge we not hastily; and we hope that ignorance, or misapprehension, or something not absolute heresy, hath brought you into this condition. Therefore, daughter, if you want instruction, we willingly condescend to instruct you, and on your confession, to absolve you. But some error there must be, to have brought you into the company where our brother this night hath found you. It is our grief and pain that wolves in sheep's clothing go about to subvert and lead away the simple ones of the flock; but be not cast down, our prescribed penance shall be gentle as the case admits. What is your name?'

'My name is Julia Pierrepoint,' she answered.

'Pierrepoint—Pierrepoint,' repeated the prelate in a low voice; 'I surely heard that name before to-day in some way to draw my attention.' He put his hand to his forehead, as if to assist in the concentration of his thoughts for a moment, and then turning again to Julia, said, 'And your residence?'

'My home is distant,' she replied; 'my residence of late has been in London.'

'We must have clear answers to the questions we put,' resumed the Archbishop in a decided voice; 'we must know where your permanent dwelling is.'

'At Pierrepont Manor, in —shire,' she answered.

'And the damsel's name?' he continued.

'Is Rachel Brackenbury,' said Julia; 'she is my servant.'

'Daughter,' resumed the prelate, 'you were found this night in suspicious company; therefore, it is my duty to ascertain your belief in articles of faith. I cannot think you deep in the mazes of error. Believe you in the holy catholic, apostolic church?'

'I do,' she replied.

'Good,' observed the prelate. 'But what, in that case, took you to the conventicle?'

'To hear the Scriptures expounded,' was her answer.

The Archbishop smiled scornfully: 'No doubt; women too must talk of expositions now-a-days,' he muttered, 'who ought to know just what their confessors tell them, and no more. Our new device will be useful to bind their devotions; it will suit them better than dry divinity to count the rosary of beads invented to answer to our lady's psalter.¹ And, pray, what may you know of the Scriptures, young woman?'

'Far less than I desire to know,' she replied; 'and I am therefore glad to seek instruction where it is to be found.'

'But, daughter, you seek it at polluted fountains; and poisonous waters will not refresh you. We are willing to instruct you; and out of the pale of the holy catholic church, I tell you, there is no salvation. I am now coming to a very solemn question, on a point which the unlearned and unstable followers of the hypocrite, Wycliffe, do wrest to their own destruction. Daughter, do you believe in the real presence in the eucharist?' Julia

Note I.

was silent, and the prelate resumed. 'I wonder not you are puzzled; but I must have an answer,—how believest thou?'

'I believe,' she answered, 'that He who did institute that blessed rite to commemorate a solemn and sacred event, is still present with his believing people when they partake of it in faith.'

'Ah! you can sophisticate a little,' quickly rejoined the prelate; 'but that will not do. I ask you, do you believe that it is material bread which is brought into the church?'

'I do,' she answered.

'And after consecration by the priest, do you believe that it continues material bread still?'

'I desire to speak on so weighty a subject with caution and reverence,' she replied.

'Were you ever examined on these points before?' asked the Archbishop.

'I never was questioned in this way before; but I hope I have examined the subject for myself by the light of the Scriptures,' was her answer.

'There, it is,' said the dignitary, looking at his priest. 'The Scriptures! this comes of these English books; and now that men can print, the evil will grow apace. I fear our brother too justly remarked, that if we root not out printing, it will root out us, and all truth will be subverted; perverse misconstructions will be put on the Scriptures, which holy church has never sanctioned, and men, through their own glosses, and the deceitfulness of the great enemy, will learn to reject her doctrines, till she shall no longer be able to hold their minds in control. Alas, alas! how are we chastised for our sins!' This speech was partly soliloquy, partly addressed in an undertone to the priest. He now resumed his examination.

'Your answers, daughter,' he said, 'are not satisfactory;

you must be more explicit. But, in the meantime, to pass from that question, do you believe that it is a meritorious thing to go on pilgrimage—to Canterbury, for instance, to worship the relics of him, whose unworthy successors we, in this See, are?’

‘I only believe in the lawfulness of our pilgrimage,’ answered Julia.

‘And where may that favoured shrine be, daughter?’ inquired her examiner.

‘St. Peter writes,’ she said, ‘that we are all strangers and pilgrims in this world; and such as receive a true pilgrim spirit are going on their pilgrimage continually to the new Jerusalem, whence, when they have once arrived, they shall wander no more.’

‘Then you mean to say, that you do not think there is merit in visiting the shrines of those holy martyrs, where miracles without number have been wrought?’

‘I would tell your grace other than the truth,’ she said, ‘if I did not confess, that I do not believe there is merit or efficacy in any such pilgrimage.’

‘I fear you are deeply tainted,’ observed the prelate, somewhat ruffled, ‘and must undergo longer process than I anticipated. There is one relic, however, the virtue of which you will not surely deny,—I mean the holy cross. You worship that, do you not?’

‘I worship Him who gave his life for an expiation thereon,’ she replied, solemnly. ‘As for the material cross, it is, it was but insensible, inanimate wood; in it could be no power to heal or save.’

‘Marry, but this is an unusual case,’ cried his grace, as he rose from his seat in evident perturbation. ‘Women we have had on trial often, but almost never did receive from them answers like these.’ He drew his priest into a recess, where they conversed for a short time in tones too low for Julia to distinguish their words, but they related

to the manner of her disposal. The Archbishop gave Gasper to understand that the case was beset with greater difficulties than he had any idea of. In the meantime, the two prisoners were to be lodged in the Lollard's tower, but not rigorously treated. For these arrangements, the prelate had his own reasons; but the only one he chose to assign, was his wish to try, first of all, to persuade by gentle means; if these failed, of course they would see it their duty to act otherwise. To-morrow the prisoners should be examined separately, and by that time matters might assume another aspect. The Archbishop, however, wished from his heart, that as the rest of the lollards had escaped, Julia had escaped along with them; but this, in the meantime, he kept to himself.

While this parley was held, various thoughts passed through the mind of Julia Pierrepoint. Would the mention of her brother's name and rank be of any avail to procure her liberation, or should she reserve that disclosure at present? She remembered that Eleanor Cobham, Duchess of Gloucester, notwithstanding the influence of her exalted station, had some years before been banished to the Isle of Man through the machinations of the clergy, and under the poor pretence of sorcery; while she was satisfied, that the religious opinions of the Duchess had been the source of her persecution. The court, as well as the dignitaries of the church, was, however, inimical to the victim. How the court would act in her own case, should it come to a question, she knew not. She was ignorant that her brother had that day established some claim to the protection and countenance of the king. These ideas chased each other through her mind in a rather disjointed manner. She took refuge in these words: 'Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator,' 1 Peter iv. 19. And so she found rest.

The Archbishop having finished his private conference with the priest, now again addressed Julia. 'We do not choose to hold any further communion with you to-night,' he observed; 'you shall be lodged in an apartment of our manor till to-morrow, when we hope to find you prepared to submit your creed to the unerring judgment of the church.'

'Am I then to be detained here?' asked Julia.

'Yes, at our pleasure,' answered the prelate, rather sternly; and she, forbearing to make any remark, followed the priest from his grace's presence.

After traversing several passages, they came to the foot of a dark and narrow staircase. On finding they were to ascend, Rachel gave one or two faint exclamations, nor could her mistress refrain from inquiring where they were going.

'To a mighty comfortable place,' answered her guide; 'and you may thank your lucky stars it is not as far down you are to be sent. But ye had better mind what ye say on the morrow, or I'll not promise such good accommodations hereafter.' He paused at a door on the staircase, and turning the lock, ushered them into a not very comfortable apartment. But it was a prison, and bore the marks of it. The furnishings were desolate enough, consisting of two hard pallets and a rude table. Julia was sure, however, that there were much worse places in the palace of Lambeth; and when the priest put down a small lamp on the table, and took his departure, she was thankful to be in any place where she might be suffered to compose her agitated thoughts. She was offered refreshments, but would accept of nothing save cold water. She seated herself in a kind of stupor, as she tried to realize to herself the singular occurrences of the last few hours. She was then under the restraint of prison bars;—how strange—how appalling was the sensation produced by this re-

fection! She was soon roused, however, from the indulgence of her own melancholy meditations, by the grief of Rachel, who, burying her face in her hands, and laying her head on the table, sobbed violently. Julia felt at the moment that it would have done her a service to have assigned her a separate room; but the poor girl was not in a state of mind for solitude, and she blamed herself for the wish. She felt it hard to have her attention taken up with another, when she had so much to press on her own spirit; but on looking back, in aftertimes, to these sad hours, she deemed this circumstance a mercy, for there was no saying how it might have operated on her own mind, had she been left at the moment to the full and free scope of her feelings. After having suffered the poor attendant to weep for a short time without remark, she said, 'Rachel, is this the way you expect to be a comfort to me?' At this query Rachel started.

'Dear mistress, I think I am going to die,' she sobbed out. 'I am sure I can't live here.'

'We know not how much we can endure till we are tried,' said Julia.

'I wish—I wish—I had never come to London. I wish I was at Pierrepoint Manor,' reiterated Rachel.

Julia sighed deeply, while she observed, 'These wishes are idle now, and you are making a bad preparation for the trials that probably await you. I had hoped better things of you. Do you not see me placed in a like situation? Oh! Rachel, I am greatly afraid of your steadfastness.'

'Dear madam, I'll try to be calm,' said the maid; 'but what is to become of us?'

'That I cannot know; but one thing I do know, that no temptation can befall us that we shall not receive strength to bear, if we seek for it. The Friend who sticketh closer than a brother will uphold us—the Friend in life, in death,

in eternity. Rachel Brackenbury, I believe you will to-morrow be called upon to abjure the faith I have seen you professing these three years past; you will be required to worship the idols of wood, and the relics of sinful men—ay, bones, perhaps, that never even formed a portion of the body of the dead, sainted by an idolatrous church. Rachel Brackenbury, are you ready to be reviled and persecuted for the confession of His gospel, who said unto his disciples, “Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy?”¹

The vehemence of Rachel's grief was somewhat subdued by this unexpected appeal. Julia's unwonted energy of address astonished her; and she looked with a wondering and vacant gaze on her usually placid and gentle mistress.

‘Poor girl!’ continued Julia, her voice softening into a compassionate expression; ‘I fear you have but a faint heart for the times wherein your lot is fallen; but He who overrules all human occurrences for his own glory, often chooses the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. Rachel, our Lord prayed for his erring follower, Peter, that his faith might not fail. He continues to intercede on behalf of sinners; and we shall now pray to Him that out of the lion's den and out of the paw of the bear He may deliver us.’ They knelt, and theirs were circumstances to call out prayer in strong and pleading faith. Refreshed in spirit, but exhausted in body, Julia rose from her knees, and, soothed like an infant, Rachel was persuaded to lie down on one of the hard pallets, not however without respectfully urging her mistress first to suffer her to endeavour to add to the comfort of that on which she was to repose. Julia believed that sleep would be a stranger to her pillow that night, but she refused not the proffered kindness of her maid, and Rachel

¹ Luke xii. 1.

was soon lost in temporary forgetfulness of her sorrows. Julia stretched herself upon her comfortless couch, and felt as if relieved from a burden when the long-drawn breathings of her poor timid attendant convinced her that she was fast asleep.

She could now, unobserved, give vent to her own pent-up feelings, and a flood of tears came to her relief. She rose from her pallet, and renewed her supplications for grace, strength, and direction, till she was filled with a sweet and calm assurance that she should not be forsaken in the hour of trial.

After this she became composed, and endeavoured to realize the probable result of her captivity. She was sure that she should undergo a rigid examination, but beyond that she scarcely dared to venture a conjecture. Her chief anxiety was that she should be enabled to maintain self-possession on her trial, and to state the truth she believed with clearness and constancy. Words precious to the tried and persecuted of all ages came to her mind: 'Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.'¹ There was one feature of her case that distressed her much, and that was the various impressions her mysterious disappearance would create. Her brother,—her affectionate but hot-headed brother,—how would he feel? what could he think when he discovered it? It was quite possible she might not be missed that night, as she gave the family no reason to think she should join them for the rest of the evening. Henry was to spend the time elsewhere, and the morning would most likely arrive before her absence was known; but then she was expected to be in readiness for her journey at an early hour. She could not picture to herself the scene that must ensue without very painful emotions. On this eventful night an epitome of her own life pre-

¹ Luke xii. 4.

sented itself vividly to her imagination. She went back in thought to her earliest years, and her father's figure seemed to stand before her, as her childish recollections had painted him. Then she reverted to the scenery at Ashley, and to the kind and parental care bestowed upon her by Reginald De la Pole; to the reverend man whose voice had oftentimes conveyed to her mind the truths, on account of which she was now in so extraordinary a situation; and with that she was led again to entreat that she might not shrink in the day of fiery trial. There was another individual who formed a part of that mental pantomime, and words of warning which had been spoken came back forcibly to her mind.

Completely exhausted at last in mind and body, she slept for a short time. Short as it was, she awoke somewhat invigorated, and the first object that met her eyes was a straggling sunbeam. Renewed fear crept over her as she looked upon her prison walls, and observed them here and there studded with huge rings to which prisoners were often fastened. The occurrences of the last twenty-four hours seemed like a sad vision of the night, but stern reality told her it was not so. The small apertures which served for windows were high above the floor; she could not reach them to see out, but she heard the rolling waters of the Thames. Rachel was still asleep, her wan and pale countenance bearing traces of the bitter tears she had shed on the previous night, and Julia wished to know the hour of the day. She was not long in suspense on this subject, for the bolts of her door were removed, and a servitor appeared bearing a slight repast; he told her the time, but would not answer any other questions. Preparations, however, were going on for the investigation of her case.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE Archbishop of Canterbury had summoned his secretary at an early hour, and employed him to take notes of the conversation he had held with his prisoner on the previous evening, as also some sentences gathered from Gasper's report of Risby's sermon. This done, the dignitary gave his confidants to understand that several difficulties surrounded the case in hand.

'You are not ignorant,' he said, 'of the lamentable state of the country, which has been the means, alas! of paralysing the praiseworthy efforts of the church in uprooting heresy. In the days of our holy brother, Thomas Arundel, no private considerations controlled his zealous care for the good of the church; and the pious kings, in whose reigns it was his happy fortune to rule, were always ready to give their aid for the promotion of the righteous cause. The monarch's favour was withheld from that archtraitor Lord Cobham, albeit he was his friend, so soon as he turned his sacrilegious hand against the church, and he consequently suffered the punishment he deserved.

'In our degenerate days matters assume a different aspect. The sovereign is so bound and fettered by the constant recurrence of feuds and civil wars, that this, that, and the other thing must be considered before the secular arm is given in aid of the spiritual power.

‘Brethren, it is ours to condemn ; but you know we lay no hands on men in the way of public execution. It is true we meekly and gently examine and decree ; to the tender mercies of the law we leave our contumacious children. And here is our present loss : the countenance of his followers is so important to the king, that it is in vain to expect his consent even to the investigation of a case that might involve any high or noble name. It behoves us also to act with circumspection, for it may yet be doubtful whether we are to live eventually under the sway of a Yorkist or of a Lancastrian. Now I mention all this because I believe that the new-comer into our custody is one who may involve us in an unpleasant dilemma. She is, if I mistake not, sister to Sir Henry Pierrepont, of whom I learned some particulars at the Tower yesterday. I was there, as you know, to unite with those who were called together to renew their oath of allegiance, and there I saw the youth I speak of. His family were Lancastrians, but in the present emergency he has engaged himself to stand by King Edward. I would not have the prisoner to imagine that her worldly interest is of the least moment in the matter ; but I am under the impression I have disclosed to you, and should her case be pushed to extremity, I have no hope that the king would at this juncture sanction the measures we might deem salutary. You see how difficult a part is ours, on whose shoulders rests so heavy a burden as the governance of the whole church in this kingdom ;—we may not let heresy escape ; we would not excite tumult ; we would avoid aught that savours of disaffection. With regard, however, to our erring child, Julia Pierrepont, she must in the meantime be held in safe ward, as she has fallen into our hands,—no man may gainsay our authority in that particular. Where she is to be placed, I have not quite determined,—mayhap the convent at Sion. The

Bridget nuns will be rigid and sure guards; and who can tell but their holy example may yet convert her, or rather reclaim her? Alas! for the times, that they are such as to circumscribe us in this manner, who ought to govern absolutely without reference to secular prince. We shall first try what our own persuasions can do. We have seen a few individuals before, who at the first stood as obstinately as she did; but we, in our charity, and the love we bore them, did use such means as made them thereafter abjure, as I hope she will shortly do, and so end this business. We shall now proceed to question her further. Gasper, have the lady produced alone; we want not the maid at present.'

The mandate was quickly obeyed, and the door of Julia's prison creaked on its hinges to admit the messenger. His announcement was laconic, and her obedience was prompt. She was led into an apartment which had more of an official air than the one she had seen on the previous night. And there were several persons present. She was pale and exhausted from the agitating occurrences of yesterday; but firm and patiently resolved.

'Daughter,' said the Archbishop, 'if I mistake not, you belong to a house no less illustrious by descent than by noble courage and true faith, and we doubly grieve to think that, through false information and dangerous counsel, you should be brought into the circumstances wherein we find you. But we trust devoutly, though now entangled in the briers, as a strayed sheep, you will shortly be returned into the fold, and by your penitence and edifying walk, become a blessing yet in some community of holy sisters. Are you the daughter of the late Sir Edmund Pierrepoint?'

'I am,' she answered.

'I thought so,' said the prelate, with an intelligent glance at those to whom he had previously mentioned his belief

of this fact. 'I am sure your father lived and died a true son of the Church.'

'Alas!' said Julia, with a sigh, 'he left me an orphan, too young to know or judge of his belief.'

'You have a brother, have you not?' resumed the Archbishop.

'I have—one only brother,' she replied.

'And he—how doth he believe?' inquired the prelate. 'Is he a heretic?'

'Will your grace be pleased to tell me what you call heresy?' said Julia, with modest self-possession.

'Marry, that I shall,' he answered. 'The faith professed by the sect of the base lollards we justly call heresy; they are but a beggarly set, and I cannot choose but wonder that any individual among the higher classes should ever unite with such. Your brother surely cannot be a lollard?'

'He is not,' she said.

'Well, we may by and by arrive at the reasons of your belief differing so widely from that of your family,' observed the prelate. 'We asked you two or three questions yesternight, to which you afforded in nowise satisfactory replies. These questions we must again repeat. And first I ask you, what you believe as touching the sacrament of the altar?'

'I believe simply what the Bible tells me on this subject,' was her answer.

'But I am sure you cannot be ignorant,' resumed the prelate, 'how that holy church, under the governance of the pope, our lord, doth teach, that after consecration properly done by the priest, the bread is transubstantiated into the real substance of the flesh of Him who died on the cross, even as He bore it then—even as He wears it now.'

'I never found it so stated in the Bible,' she answered; 'and as to the mystical arguments on this sacred subject, I judge myself unfit to engage in them.'

'And, for this unfitness, our mother, the Church, hath



JULIA BEFORE THE ARCHBISHOP.

provided a sufficient and easy remedy. She has stated what her faith is on this subject, and all she requires of her dear children, or indeed leaves them to do, is to believe it. I ask again, do you believe otherwise than she directs?’

After a few moments’ silence, Julia replied, ‘I read in the holy Scriptures, that an “everlasting righteousness”¹ was wrought out for believers by the one perfect sacrifice finished on Calvary; and that, for those who reject it, “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.”² But if I understand your doctrine aright, the priest is said to offer sacrifice every time the commemorating sacrament is set forth in sensible signs, and so there be a multiplication of Saviours.’

‘Know ye not,’ said the Archbishop, ‘that in Him is power to be present everywhere at the same moment of time?’

‘Yes, I do trust I know and believe that animating and supporting doctrine,’ she replied; ‘but it is in spirit, and not in a corporeal substance, which we may feel with our external senses.’

‘I thought,’ observed the prelate, referring to his secretary for the notes he had dictated to him,—‘I thought you confessed your belief in the holy catholic church, last night?’

‘There is a confession to this purpose recorded,’ said the secretary.

‘Ay—what say you to that?’ resumed his grace.

‘I deny it not,’ answered Julia.

‘And what is the use of your professed belief in the Church?—it can have no meaning if so be that you reject her interpretations.’

‘I reject not any interpretation of the church that I understand and know,’ she said. ‘But I am sure the

¹ Dan. ix. 24.

² Heb. x. 26.

members that compose the true church own not, and teach not, the doctrine you now propound for my belief.'

'Marry, do you mean to tax me with ignorance?' cried the prelate with some heat. 'I, who am prelate of all England, and also legate of the See apostolic—I ignorant of the doctrines that are known to the lowest order of my priests?'

'Sir, I never said nor insinuated this,' said Julia. 'I spoke not of the church in which you rule, I spoke of another.'

'Ah! and what call you this church?' demanded the dignitary.

'I call it,' she calmly answered, 'that blessed company, gathered out of all kindreds, and tongues, and people, who believe in the truths of the Bible, confess them with their mouths, and practise them in their lives.'

The Archbishop was a good deal disconcerted; the answers were such as he did not expect, and he was astonished at Julia's composure. He whispered to the priest who stood next him, 'This is a harder case than I expected. What advise you next?'

'Ask her of Risby, your grace,' he said. 'I'll gage my albe, this one is deep in their secrets.'

'Passing for the present those points whereon we have just spoken,' resumed the dignitary, again addressing the prisoner, 'I have other questions to put. Know you where Risby is—the preacher you heard at the conventicle last night?'

'I do not, your grace,' she answered.

'But you seem to be pretty well instructed in sophistry, lady,' observed the Archbishop; 'and although it is likely you cannot tell us where that troubler of the peace is at this identical moment, doubtless you can give us some information concerning him.'

'I cannot truly,' said Julia. 'I never either saw or

heard Mr. Risby save twice, and I never spoke with him in my life.'

'Will your grace ask her to swear this on the gospels?' whispered a prompter.

'Nay, nay, agitate not that question just now, we have enough on our hands without it. Know you many of this pestiferous sect—the followers of that wicked priest, Wycliffe?' he asked, renewing his examination.

'I do know some who believe the truths which Dr. John Wycliffe believed and taught,' she said.

'Will you name any of them?'

'If I should,' she answered, 'it would only bring them into trouble; and this I cannot consent to do.'

'Pity but this spirit was bestowed on a better cause,' whispered the Archbishop. Then turning again to Julia, he said, 'Where did you first learn this heretical pravity?'

'If your grace calls the verity by this hard name,' said Julia, while her eyes filled with tears, 'I learned it among those who are beyond the power of human inquisition; therefore, I name them gratefully and willingly. One of my instructors was Reginald De la Pole, my father's near kinsman; the other whom I chiefly acknowledge as such, was John Beverley, who, if ever a creature of frail humanity were worthy of sancting, he was.'

'This prating is mere waste of time,' exclaimed the prelate, who wanted to hear of living heretics, and cared very little about dead ones. 'I suppose I need not ask if you have a confessor; you are too far gone for that. But your brother must of course acknowledge such a functionary; how is he named?'

'His name,' she replied, 'is Swinderby.'

'Methinks he must have been negligent in his vineyard,' observed the prelate; 'this must be inquired into.'

'He is a zealous man, and sincerely serves his church,' said Julia eagerly. 'Your grace has not to rest any blame

on him, for often has he exhorted me, to the best of his ability.'

'Hem—say you so?' muttered the Archbishop, musing a little. 'Daughter, you have given us just cause of offence; but willing rather that a sinner turn, and live, we yet offer you absolution, if you seek it at our hands, meekly and humbly confessing before us.'

'I have not intended any offence to your grace,' said Julia, 'or I would sincerely ask your pardon.'

'I speak not of myself personally,' explained the prelate, 'I speak as the head of the Church in England. I ask you to confess your grievous sins against her; I offer you absolution; I bid you beware how you refuse it.'

'Truth forces me to make an avowal that cannot fail to be displeasing to your grace,' she said. 'I do not believe in the power of a human creature to absolve me of sin; therefore, I cannot profit by your offer. The Head of the church universal can pardon my sins,—to Him alone I look.'

'By St. Thomas, but this is too much,' cried the Archbishop, in evident anger; 'we have given much of our precious time, and have with meekness and patience used the power that is in our hands; with diligence have we set before you your duty; yet, insensible to our fatherly clemency, nothing can move you. By our lady, but John Beverley hath left in thee a bright specimen of his satanic teaching. How wouldst thou relish a penance barefoot to Canterbury, young woman? tell me that.'

'Indeed, it is what I shall never voluntarily do,' she replied; 'for I know that such goings cannot avail to profit or edification.'

'Perhaps, however, you may have to try a harder task than that,' observed the prelate with vehemence. 'We are not to be trifled with; yet such is our gentleness, that we are desirous still to afford longer time for calm reflec-

tion : be but foolhardy enough to deprive yourself of the benefits we freely offer, and you shall finally be accursed, and excommunicated, by bell, book, and candle !' The Archbishop changed his position as if to suffer the workings of his mind to evaporate, spoke some words to his secretary, and then, without considering the delicate frame of his harassed prisoner, who could scarcely stand longer, resumed the proceedings by asking Gasper to rehearse some of the notes of Risby's sermon.

'He said,' witnessed the priest, 'that the pope was antichrist, and that your grace and all of us were his members.'

'What say you to that, mistress ?' inquired the prelate.

'If I may be believed, sir,' answered Julia, 'Mr. Risby mentioned not your name ; for the rest it is true enough.'

'He said,' resumed Gasper, 'that it is unseemly for those who call themselves followers of the apostles to bear rule and amass wealth.'

'What say you to this ?' again inquired the Archbishop, addressing his prisoner.

'I believe it to be wholesome doctrine,' she responded.

'He said,' again testified Gasper, 'that he was content to be an outcast, so that he could feed his Master's flock ; and that if priests would study their Bible more than their portass, and preach its doctrines when they were muttering Aves, we should soon see a new order of things.'

'No doubt we should,' interrupted the prelate, with a sneer. 'Proceed.'

'He said,' continued the priest, 'false losel that he is ! that holy church did harass, oppress, and extort from the poor that which they had need of through bare necessity, and wasted it in riotous living.'

'Call you this wholesome doctrine,' cried the dignitary, 'to teach the people ?'

'The doctrines are sound in themselves,' said Julia ;

'but they are harshly repeated, and they did not form the principal part of Mr. Risby's sermon. What he said on this subject, he spoke more in sorrow than in anger. His discourse concerned more what the Christian people should be, than the duties of the hierarchy.'

'We do not want your exposition,' said the prelate, impatiently. 'The time we thought of devoting to this case is more than expired, other matters demand our immediate attention; therefore we conclude this examination, to be resumed at a fitting opportunity. We must find other cogent arguments, since those we have already essayed fail of success; meantime, Gasper, I recommit the prisoner to your charge.'

Julia was again led from the presence of the Archbishop, and, scarcely able to walk, she followed the priest, till he stopped at a door in the same tower staircase she had before ascended; they had passed by the room she formerly occupied, and were considerably higher up. 'Where is my servant?' she inquired, for the place into which she was ushered was entirely solitary.

'Leave her to us,' answered her gruff conductor; 'we'll look after her, as we intend doing after you;' and he hastily shut and locked the door, without waiting for further parley.

When Julia was left to herself, though it was in a prison from whence she knew not how, or when, she should emerge, her first emotion was devout thankfulness for the strength vouchsafed to her in so trying a scene as that through which she had just passed. She had been enabled to reply to the questions put, with a precision and composure that she had not thought it possible for her to have attained. She had been kept from compromising either the verity she believed, or the friends of the cause she loved. She was also relieved that the voices of scorners sounded no longer in her ears, and she felt quite willing

to do or to suffer whatever was in store for her. She was rather uneasy about Rachel; but overtaxed nature made her soon lie down on the single stretcher which now furnished her prison. The walls were studded, as in the lower room, with large rings; and as imagination wandered to the former occupants of the prison, she involuntarily conjured up many a scene of horror, bearing painfully on her own unhappy situation. She had been alone between two and three hours, when her door again moved upon its hinges, and Gasper stood before her accompanied by Rachel, whose downward looks and perfect silence filled her mistress instantly with fears that she had been worked upon to abjure.

‘Come, child, commence the first part of your penance,’ said the priest.

‘Oh! I cannot, dare not speak to her,’ sobbed Rachel; ‘she will scorn me.’

‘Scorn you!’ repeated Gasper; ‘a mighty matter, when you come to show her the example she should have shown you.’ But Rachel shrank back, as if unable to bear the calm but fixed gaze of Julia.

‘Poor girl!’ said her mistress; ‘it is as I had feared.’

‘I could not—could not help it,’ cried Rachel, a little assured by the sound of Julia’s voice, though the words it conveyed were little comforting. ‘I was confused, I knew not what to answer. I said I would do whatever they liked.’

‘Have a care what you say, young one,’ observed Gasper; ‘mind me, if you express any regret for your confession, your penance is doubled.’

‘Oh! Rachel, you have forsaken the Prince of Peace to serve hard masters,’ said her mistress. ‘His yoke is easy, and his burden is light;’¹ but theirs is a scourge of scorpions.’

¹ Matt. xi. 30.

'But—but, dear lady, what is to become of you?' stammered Rachel. 'I am to be sent away to-morrow, and you have no one to serve you.'

'Rachel,' said Julia, 'I need not your service; whose is unfaithful in much, cannot be faithful in little. I pity you, I will pray for you; but I wish not to see you again.'

'Aha!' cried the malicious Gasper; 'we have that from her you told us not of. There is a nest of gossellers at Pierrepont Manor that wants rousing, especially one Blondel is named.'

Julia looked aghast. 'Rachel, poor, silly, deluded girl, you have been a traitor indeed,' she said; 'and I wonder you should have come into my presence.'

'It was not willingly—it was not indeed,' said the unhappy girl.

'Ah! I understand,' said her mistress; 'they could not spare me this blow. It was a part of your penance, too; therefore I forgive you for this. But, Rachel Brackenbury, I would not for worlds bear about with me the stinging recollections that must burn in your conscience.'

'One word more of forgiveness,' sobbed Rachel, throwing herself on her knees.

'Rise from that posture,' said Julia; 'one of the things I taught you was that, save to One only, the knees should never be bent in petition.' Gasper seemed to drink in her every word, as though he sought to treasure up something that would serve as evidence against her on a future occasion. It did not escape her notice. 'I do not speak unadvisedly,' she said, 'note my words as you list; I am ready to repeat them when and where I am required.' Then again turning to Rachel, she added, 'I do forgive you, as you never will forgive yourself.'

Rachel was unable to utter another word; so the priest seeing no good likely to arise from the interview, hurried her away.

Julia had now a new subject to harass her thoughts; nor could she guess how far Rachel might have been led to exaggerate; after she had departed from the plain path of duty, there was no saying where she might stop. Of her history she knew nothing of consequence to tell, more than that which was already clearly revealed—her heresy.

It has been already stated that Julia was ignorant of her brother's new engagement in the service of the king, and of the rumour which had given rise to its occasion; but had she known it, there was little therein to console her. No one knew her situation; she might linger where she was, while those who loved her sought in vain to learn her fate. Everything before her was in the confusion of chaos, except as regarded her trust in the faithful promises.

Henry would, she knew, risk everything for her deliverance,—censure, excommunication, life itself; but, alas! he knew not where she was.

The Archbishop was perplexed also in his own way. His chief desire now was to get rid of his prisoner in the most creditable manner he could; and he never wished more for condemnatory evidence in another case, than he wished for a word of recantation from Julia Pierrepont. After she had been placed in ward the second time, Rachel had been brought out and questioned; a short process was found sufficient in her case. Rachel was not insincere, she believed herself a Wycliffite; but, like many who are called followers of this or that name, she was not a living disciple of the great Master; she had never taken the matter and made it the subject of deep personal consideration; she followed whither she was led, perfectly satisfied to embrace the truths her mistress took so much pains to teach her. When put upon her trial alone, the poor girl was quite unable to make the least defence of the faith she outwardly professed; and after a little threatening, she agreed to repeat the form of abjuration prescribed, and with meek

submission to do penance. She was thereafter closely questioned, concerning the Pierrepont family, upon oath, and told of the heresy of Blondel and some others. Of this information they resolved to make future use.

It was decided that Rachel should be taken straight from the scene of her miserable recantation to the presence of her mistress, with the double intention of confusing and distressing both. She was immediately after sent away to the nunnery at Sion, to be rigidly superintended. The prelate's next care was to send a spy to endeavour to find out in what manner his prisoner's capture was felt in the circle to which she belonged. Some hours passed away before his return; and, in the interval, his grace dined and refreshed himself after his morning's sederunt. In the evening Gasper was again in requisition, to consider their perplexing case.

'Well, Gasper,' said the Archbishop, as soon as he made his appearance, 'the scout has returned. He has been in the precincts of the palace, and managed his errand very well. He brings me word that the disappearance of this same lady is making quite a sensation; the story is now in everybody's mouth. Her brother has declared his determination to turn the world upside down to find her, and the king has offered a reward for her discovery. Time was, when all this could not have had the smallest effect on our proceedings; but the affair has happened at an awkward juncture, and it is my belief that the king would not listen even to our counsel, at the risk of losing a partisan of influence.'

'Send the lady to Saltwood,' said the unrelenting Gasper, 'and you may well defy search.'

'No, that is not my plan,' observed the dignitary. 'The matter might out; many are cognizant of our design on Risby and his hearers. So, with one thing or another, the truth might be elicited; and it could not be borne that

men should conceive of our doing by stealth that which we shrank from doing openly. No, no, Gasper, you have not turned over this business at all corners as I have done. To tell truth, I wish you had not made this same capture; but there is no help for that. I have considered everything, and my determination is made. A trusty messenger, Friar Stokes, I think, must be sent away this very night to fetch hither that Swinderby of whom he spoke—the priest of the Augustine priory near her dwelling—the same who confesses her brother. We shall advise with him as to her disposal, and if no better plan can be arranged, we shall, perhaps, send her back under his charge in the meantime, admonishing him to watch her closely, and see to the varlet Blondel, whom the damsel has denounced. This is the best I can advise; and some nights' cold and solitary lodging in the tower here, which must take place in the interval, may serve to take down that patrician spirit of hers. Your charge, then, is to get the messenger ready for his journey without any delay, while I prepare his credentials, and indite a letter to the Prior.'

The priest was too well disciplined to make any demur to the execution of the Archbishop's sovereign will. He left his presence to obey orders; and Friar Stokes, with his instructions and letters of credit, was soon despatched.

He travelled during the most of the night; and such were his orders, that he continued his journey with the like diligence during the following day. It was not to be supposed, however, that the friar chose a rapid pace; on the contrary, he remembered by the way his bodily necessities, and his beast's likewise; so that it was at a late hour he reached his destination, and requested an interview with the Superior of the convent.

After the Prior had perused the letter addressed to himself, Priest Swinderby was summoned, to be made

acquainted with the nature of the Archbishop of Canterbury's communication.

On learning the particulars of Friar Stoke's embassy, Swinderby exhibited marks of some extraordinary feeling, into the nature of which the friar, with all his penetration, could not dive. Having said that he would be ready to start by early dawn, the confessor retired to his cell, and was no more seen that night by the prelate's messenger. It was believed by the brethren that he was engaged in penitential exercises; but the priest was in reality otherwise occupied. The priory was about three miles distant from Pierrepoint Manor, yet there, under cover of night, Swinderby bent his steps. What his errand was, we shall not anticipate, as it is necessary first to state the proceedings of Sir Heury, after he became aware of the startling fact of his sister's disappearance.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN the evening of Julia's capture, her brother had retired to his room without making any inquiry after her. He rose early, and knocked at his sister's door to warn her it was time to get ready. He received no answer, and on inquiry found that none of the domestics had seen Rachel that morning. Her room was within that of her mistress, and Henry rapped a second time more loudly than before, but without better success. Becoming impatient, he opened the door; no one was there. He proceeded to Rachel's chamber; it was in the same condition. It was evident that neither had been occupied on the previous night. Henry's dismay was inexpressible, and every individual in the house was soon made aware of the cause. He could learn nothing but that Julia had retired early, and as it was believed she wished to be alone, no one had intruded upon her. Violent in all his emotions, Henry threw himself on a chair, while his face assumed a pale hue, and he cast a look of almost suspicion and dislike on the family who were now assembled with him, to wonder and to conjecture. Henry's painful excitement was so evident, that no person ventured to address a word to him directly; but, 'Extraordinary! what can be the meaning of this?' fell from the lips of one and another of the group.

'She is such an odd girl, that nobody can tell what she

might do,' at last whispered Lady Villiers to her husband, treating Henry as if he were without the hearing faculty. But the remark did not pass unobserved.

'Odd!' he repeated, as he rose hastily; 'it is, at least, odd to say so in my presence;' and with that he strode out of the room.

Sir George Villiers followed him. 'My dear young friend,' he said, soothingly, 'I beseech you to be calm; we all deeply sympathize in your sorrow, and wish to administer comfort, if we could. You are agitated; do but reflect that methods must be used to find out the mystery in which your sister's disappearance is involved. Of course your departure for the Manor must be postponed, and nothing shall be left undone to ascertain the place of her retreat.'

Henry would scarcely listen to reason; he was inclined to proceed homewards at once; but on cooling a little, he saw that it was hardly within the bounds of probability his sister could be heard of by such a step, and he consented to remain.

Accompanied by his host, he explored every place in London with which he knew or supposed Julia to be acquainted; not, indeed, in the hope of finding her in any of them, but in order to spread his sad intelligence as widely as he could, that every one who knew her might be enlisted in the duty of search. Even the court was soon full of rumours concerning the mysterious fate of the fair and retiring stranger, and an hundred tongues put as many different constructions on the occurrence.

The king, desirous to testify his interest in the family of his new adherent, readily expressed his determination to make every effort for Julia's restoration to her friends. He offered a large reward for the discovery of her retreat, little imagining that she was captive under the authority of a high spiritual despotism, which he might have solicited

but scarcely could have thought of commanding. It never occurred to Edward that any, save a member of the true faith, could write themselves Pierrepont, of that ancient house; and he dreamed not that he was aiding and abetting the deliverance of a heretic out of the hands of the well-beloved Thomas Bowchere, the illustrious prelate of the See of Canterbury. Had he known this, he would have pursued a different plan; he would have humbly sued for the liberation of the offender, explaining to the Archbishop the dilemma in which he was placed, and begging his fatherly consideration. He would have presented for his reflection the suspected incipient rebellion of the turbulent king-maker, the importance of adherents, and the policy he must pursue until the period when the ball of the state should be still more entirely at his feet; so that, if the king and the prelate had been able to divine each other's thoughts, an arrangement might have easily been made between them.

But although the fact of Julia's heresy was unknown to the king, it was well known in the family where her temporary dwelling had been made, and had been much commented on. Rachel Brackenbury had been bantered about her profession of lollardism among the servants, although she by no means wished to betray it. There was something about the manners of Blondel, and the consideration in which he was held by his master, that prevented their interference with him. Rachel had firmly resolved, as she thought, that she should never be tempted to reveal the secret of her expedition with her mistress to hear Risby preach, and she was aware that she should consult her own safety by keeping counsel on this point. But Rachel's judgment was not sufficient to direct her safely through the difficulties she had to contend with in an establishment like that of Sir George Villiers; and one day, when grievously annoyed by some of the servants on

the score of her suspected night excursion, she said that she was hearing better things than they could teach her. This imprudent rejoinder was not forgotten. The disappearance of Julia and her maid revived its recollection; and by the time Sir Henry returned from his perambulations, sick at heart with disappointment, hints had reached from the kitchen to the hall, that threw a dim light on the extraordinary occurrence. There could be no doubt that on the evening of the masked fête, she had been somewhere from home with the page and the maid. This, coupled with Rachel's hint, brought out as their result a suspicion nearer the truth than such conjectures usually are. It was surmised then, pretty confidently, that Rachel and her mistress must have gone out to attend a conventicle; they had not returned,—but here conjecture was quite at fault.

These rumours no sooner came to the ears of Henry Pierrepont than he resolved on leaving London that very night. As a last resource, he had some faint hope that Blondel could afford a clue to the mystery. He was, at all events, acquainted with his sister's first visit to the conventicle, and he could tell at least in what part of London the congregation had assembled; he might also know if there was to be a meeting on that fated Tuesday night. How these pieces of information were to serve him now, Henry knew not; the rest of the chain of evidence must be made up at a subsequent period. Julia's fate was dark indeed; and her brother, with that injustice so common in the world, threw all the blame on her religion. Had she not been a gospeller, she would not have gone to their worship; had she not gone there, she had been safe. At that moment the whole band of protesters against popery were odibus in his eyes, from Wycliffe downwards. With these feelings in a mind naturally irritable, Sir Henry was in no pleasant humour

for meeting the faithful and unsuspecting Blondel. The domestics at the Manor were on the outlook for their master and mistress, and so rapidly did Henry travel, that he was at home almost as soon as he could have been had he left London with his sister early in the morning, as he had intended.

When he made his appearance, unaccompanied by any but his servant, Blondel was astonished beyond measure; but it was not his part to make a remark on the subject to his master, who rushed past without seeming to observe him. The page looked at the groom for explanation, he shook his head in silence; but as soon as Sir Henry was out of hearing, he said, 'We have had the most extraordinary doings since you left London that were ever heard of. Our mistress has disappeared, no one can tell how, and my master was like to swallow up every one in the house.'

'Disappeared!' said the thunder-struck page, with slow utterance.

'Ay, and I don't think but Sir Henry believes you've a bit of the fault. I heard tell of some queer place you took her to, and my master has a fancy that she must have gone again alone, or with Rachel only, which is much the same thing; they are both away at all events.'

How the information of their secret expedition to the conventicle came to be known, Blondel was at a loss to guess; but suspicions of betrayal rushed instantly into the mind of the Wycliffite, and denouncing, imprisonment, death, presented themselves spontaneously to the thoughts of a member of that scattered church, now grown familiar with such treatment. He recollected that a sermon had been announced for that day week they had heard Risby. It instantly occurred to him, that although she had not spoken of it, his mistress might have ventured there unprotected. He staggered back and leaned against the wall, a picture of despair. He had not been in that

situation many minutes, when he was summoned to wait on Sir Henry. He had not recovered from the shock Richard's intelligence had given him, and with a ghastly countenance, he stood mutely waiting his master's commands.

He turned upon him a look of unusual sternness, as he said in a cold and severe tone, 'Your face, sir, tells me you are already informed of this fine affair.'

'I have just heard—heard of—' stammered the page.

'Ay, I do not wonder at your confusion,' said Sir Henry; 'but I may blame myself for suffering matters to go on as they have been doing, filling my house with heretics. Pray, sir, where were you on the night of the last mumming at the palace?'

Blondel thought that by revealing the place of meeting, so carefully selected for concealment by the poor Wycliffites, he might lay them open to discovery, and deprive them of their place of resort, if not involve them in still worse consequences. He was ignorant that his caution was now of no avail, and he did not see that the desired object could be in any way promoted by his divulging this particular.

'I ask you to answer me,' said Sir Henry, sternly. 'It is known in the house of Sir George Villiers that you were absent on the evening of the masking, together with my sister and Rachel Brackenbury. I ask you where you were?'

Blondel could not compromise the truth, and he answered, 'Sir, we were met with some brethren at worship for a couple of hours, and had returned long before the mumming broke up.'

'Where?' inquired Sir Henry.

'In an obscure part of London that I think you are unacquainted with, sir,' replied Blondel.

'And of course you were in the habit of such expeditions to that precious meeting?' observed his master.

'No, sir, indeed,' he said; 'I never was there before, or since.'

'There was, however, a preaching to be held at the place on that same day week; was there not?' asked Henry.

'There was, sir,' he answered; 'but of course I know nothing further, having left town.' Blondel was endeavouring to muster resolution to propose his returning immediately to London, in the hope of being instrumental in making some discovery, when his master said,—

'As nothing more satisfactory can be elicited here, I return to town to-morrow morning. You, sir, shall go also, and I promise I shall not lose sight of you till this business is unravelled.'

Inconsiderate as Henry was in most things, he now felt that he was touching a delicate subject, and that Julia's name was called up in connection with his displeasure at the page in a way he felt to be very disagreeable; therefore, for once, putting a strong curb on his feelings, he dismissed Blondel, with orders to be ready for an early journey on the morrow.

Sir Henry was at first disposed to adopt the quixotic expedient of proceeding to London with a strong band of his retainers; but he fortunately recollected that he might thus raise suspicions, without exactly knowing what enemy he was to combat; therefore, he laid aside that plan.

Such, then, was the posture of affairs at the Manor when Swinderby arrived there. When he rang the bell at the gate, every heart in the building palpitated, for by that time every individual there was aware of the story of the disappearance of their mistress. It was an unusual hour for visitors, and hopes and fears were excited, while expectations were entertained of tidings having arrived of the loved and the lost one.

Henry started on hearing the voice of Swinderby inquiring for him, and he was immediately admitted to his presence. Sir Henry expected he knew not what. He held out his hand to the confessor, but his reception was gloomy and silent.

'My son, I know you are in sorrow,' said Swinderby; 'and I thought it a fit time for me to come and offer consolation.'

'Consolation!' repeated Henry, rather scornfully; 'what consolation can you bring in a case like mine?—unless, indeed, you can restore the lost! But tell me where she is,—tell me but that,' he reiterated wildly, 'and I shall find her.' He fixed his eyes fiercely on his confessor, while he proceeded, as though he would read his very heart, 'Yes, if she is a prey to any vile machinations,'—a sudden idea had shot across his mind, and he was unable to proceed for a moment;—'you have called her a heretic who was more saintly than the most sainted votaress in your calendar; and if, I repeat, she is a prey to any machinations of your priestly inquisition, I'll raze the walls, I'll fire them, but I shall find her.'

'Be calm, my son; be calm, and listen to me,' said Swinderby; 'otherwise I must return without doing the errand that I came hither upon. It may be I can procure you some tidings of your sister, though I can tell you nothing now; but to-morrow I am to start for London by the dawn.'

'So shall I,' cried Sir Henry.

'Nay, my son, do listen to me,' said the priest, entreatingly. 'I want you to promise that you will not leave home till you hear from me in some shape.' Henry looked at him stedfastly. 'Did I ever deceive you?' asked Swinderby, and his voice trembled.

'I cannot say you did,' at length said Henry.

'Well then, have I not some title to your confidence?'

again inquired the priest. 'I ask you to rely on me implicitly once more, and believe me, you cannot do better, you cannot at this juncture do so well otherwise. I cannot be explicit, for I am under the solemn seal of secrecy; but let Blondel come to-morrow night to the house of Walter Dish, on the common, and there wait tidings: possibly he shall not receive them immediately, there may occur delays that cannot be overruled, but he shall have them as soon as I can.'

'And how do you think?' began Henry, who very much disrelished the inactive part he was requested to act.

'My son,' interrupted the confessor, 'ask me no questions, but rest assured that although you rode to London, and traversed it from end to end, and though you should stir the court from the king downwards, it could avail you nothing. I came hither secretly to tell you this, because I love you—yea,' he added, as if by an effort, 'I love your sister also. Her creed differed from mine, but I love her better than she knows; but enough, enough. Give me your hand, Sir Henry Pierrepoint, that you will do as I require; if you shall see cause to repent it, post me on every church door as a renegade deceiver. I ask not a long time; say, will you trust me?'

'If—if,' muttered Sir Henry.

'If,' added the priest, 'I prove untrue, do as I have said, or worse if you can. But I take your hand in pledge of your trust, and I give you mine in return; and let knighthood or priesthood be degraded as the compact is kept or broken.'

Swinderby was little less agitated than Henry himself, although his state of mind was manifested in a different manner. He said his time did not admit of his staying, and he would not sit down at all; he dreaded, besides, that Henry's impatience would still prompt to questions that might not be answered, and he took a hasty leave.

On returning to his convent, Swinderby passed the night in a way little calculated to prepare him for travelling; he did not lie down at all. There had been much singularity in his conduct for a long time back; but his peculiarities were attributed, among the brethren, to exalted devotion; and they had no doubt that secret mortification, with multiplied prayers and fasting, occupied the many hours he spent apart from them. This they mentioned to Friar Stokes, to account for his non-appearance; and the friar was well contented to be without the company of a brother of this stamp, till he came, much sooner than he desired, to bid him rise in order to begin their journey.

CHAPTER XV.

SWINDERBY and Friar Stokes set out with the first streak of daylight; very little conversation passed between them as they went along. The confessor's mind was deeply engaged, and could his companion have guessed the subject of his musings, he would have sympathized but little with him.

They entered London on the following day when the morning peal was ringing, and Aves were muttering in every house they passed.¹ Friar Stokes was loud in his devotions, Swinderby's were deep but silent; and the friar was, for the first time, struck by his wan and faint appearance on alighting at Lambeth.

'Beshrew me, brother, but thou hast been keeping strict vigil somehow,' he said. 'Art looking as if after a hard penance. Trust me,' he added in a confidential whisper, 'all that kind of mortification is what we can well enough spare, and the sanctified air it gives is too hardly purchased by the exercise.'

'Those whose sins press hard, Brother Stokes,' replied Swinderby, 'are at times forced to let the body's cheer be unminded. But I do not wish to discuss this point with you at present. Be pleased to inform the Archbishop that I am here at his command.'

The prelate was glad to hear that he was come, for the

¹ Note K.

charge of the fair prisoner sat rather heavily upon him. Could she be induced to retract under the eye of the confessor, and in his presence, it would be the most desirable result; but failing of this, the only plan that remained was, he thought, to send her away under strict charge, when, of course, he should get the credit of suffering her to depart from durance with very mild treatment. He gave audience to Swinderby shortly after his arrival, the priest having declined all the hospitalities of the palace until he should hold converse with his grace.

‘We greet you well, my son,’ was the prelate’s address; ‘although the business in which your presence is required is full of pain to our fatherly feelings, and we cannot help cherishing the idea that this unfortunate affair might have been settled in a quieter manner, had there been as much zeal among some of our brethren as we are fired with for the unbroken union of our beloved and holy catholic church. How is it that Mistress Julia Pierrepont, an infected heretical person, has been so long under your jurisdiction without questioning?’

‘It has not been so, your grace,’ answered Swinderby; ‘she has often been questioned.’

‘By whom?’

‘By myself oftentimes, priest unworthy!’ said the confessor solemnly, and feeling deeply the meaning of his words.

‘You have made but a sorry hand of your questioning and your teaching,’ observed the Archbishop.

‘Your grace is well aware,’ said the priest, ‘that different cases require different treatment: a short and sharp process answers best with one class of minds; a long, argumentative, and gentle one is more suitable to others; and that now under consideration belongs decidedly to the last.’

To this observation the prelate vouchsafed no reply. He

had learned that Swinderby was considered by the members of his convent a person of great sanctity. The Prior had stated that the report of heresy being in existence in the house of Sir Henry Pierrepont, and in the person of his sister, had long been the occasion of great uneasiness to him, but that he had left the affair wholly in the hands of the confessor, who knew best how to manage it. Sir Henry's good-will was both agreeable and valuable, and though himself a good catholic, he had that sort of blind affection for his sister that made him unusually sensitive about anything that affected her. This information was conveyed in the Superior's letter, and it was true in the main: he knew that Henry Pierrepont was as little of a devotee as well could be; but that was of no consequence, so long as he paid his dues regularly, employed a confessor, and 'snatched a mass' occasionally.

Had all the truth been told, the Archbishop might have been made aware that six months had gone by since the priest had held any conference with Julia on the subject of her faith; but the confessor did not think it necessary to volunteer more information than he was required to give.

'This is a sad, a very sad case,' said the prelate, addressing Swinderby; 'and I sent for you to advise about the disposal of the lady. She has been strictly kept since our examination, and in entire solitude. We thought that your presence might facilitate her recantation. What say you to be confronted with her this afternoon?—no one can so fully witness against her as you.'

Swinderby's countenance assumed a livid hue. He laboured under violent agitation of some kind, which he strove to conceal, while he said, 'Would your grace have me, the confessor of Sir Henry Pierrepont, to reveal the occurrences of his house in a public examination?'

'It shall be as private as you like,' said the Archbishop;

‘and when the good of the church and the return of schismatics are the objects, many things must be waived which otherwise might form a lawful excuse for silence.’

‘By your grace’s leave, I do not think well of the proposal,’ said the priest; ‘and it will be allowed that I ought to know how to deal with the prisoner.’

‘You have not made much of your dealings with her hitherto,’ observed the prelate, casting a rather suspicious glance at Swinderby, and then again looking over the letter he carried from his superior; there was no denying that it afforded him a good character. ‘What, then, would your sagacity recommend?’ he asked.

‘If I may be so bold as to advise,’ answered the priest, ‘the lady shall be committed to my care; and, trust me, she shall return forthwith to Pierrepont Manor, whence she seldom moves abroad, and where she shall be under careful *surveillance*.’

The Archbishop by no means wished the humble priest to dive into his thoughts; but this was, after all, the only feasible mode he himself saw of disposing of his charge. If she could be induced to recant under the view and by the assistance of the confessor, that, of course, would be infinitely more desirable; but there seemed no hope of this. He had summoned a witness who was evidently unwilling to bear his testimony, for reasons which passed his penetration to divine, and which Swinderby most assuredly would not communicate.

‘Is Sir Henry Pierrepont at the Manor?’ he inquired.

‘Yes, sir,’ answered the confessor.

‘In what state of mind is he?’

‘In a state difficult to be described,’ was the priest’s reply.

‘And what sort of a youth may he be?’ asked the prelate.

‘One who fears nothing, and, as I think, will stick at nothing to gain his ends,’ was Swinderby’s description.

‘Indeed!’ ejaculated the dignitary carelessly, as if the information were a matter of pure indifference to him, ‘I have seldom seen a heretic holding more decidedly wrong views than the lady in question. You are already aware of the manner of her arrest; we shall permit you to see and converse with her in presence of our zealous brother, Gasper; perhaps her imprisonment has tended to improve her orthodoxy. The maid, as you have heard, hath already abjured; but more than that, she has let us into a secret worth knowing; there is another dangerous and stiff-necked lollard in the establishment at Pierrepont Manor, with whom we shall deal in our own good time—a page called Blondel.’

Swinderby started. ‘Where is the damsel?’ he inquired.

‘She has departed to the convent at Sion, so you need be under no concern about her,’ said the prelate; ‘but after this Blondel it is important that we look sharply. Priest Swinderby, it is our command that you have him taken through hands so soon as you return.’

‘I shall be careful in seeing after him,’ replied the confessor, with an alacrity which pleased the Archbishop better than anything he had yet said.

‘Before we do any more in this matter,’ said he, ‘Gasper shall bring you to see the prisoner, after which I shall converse with you again.’

Julia had not been visited by any one except the grim servitor, who carried in a scanty allowance of plain diet. He might as well have been a mute, for he scarcely ever opened his mouth in her presence, and when she saw the two priests enter she was overwhelmed with astonishment. She was at a loss how to receive Swinderby’s visit; but priest and papist as he was, he was her brother’s confessor,

one with whom she had often freely conversed, to whose face she was accustomed, and to whom she entertained no personal dislike. Situated as she was, in the midst of entire strangers, who bore her nothing but malice, she could not but feel pleasure predominate, and it was under the influence of this sensation she pronounced his name.

‘I grieve to find you here,’ he said; but, without attending to his remark, she exclaimed—

‘My brother, Mr. Swinderby; what of my brother?’

‘Sir Henry is well,’ answered the confessor.

‘And knows he where I am?’ she inquired.

‘No,’ answered the priest.

‘I thought so—I thought so!’ ejaculated the poor girl.

‘If he did know,’ observed Swinderby, ‘what would that avail? You are here by a high authority which your brother could not question,—you are here as a heretic, marked, and under trial.’

An idea crossed the mind of Gasper, as he listened, that pleased him not a little, and he laid it up in his memory for future use.

‘You do not insinuate that my brother would forsake me?’ said Julia, indignantly. ‘I do not believe there is power in pope or council, or the court of Canterbury either, to effect that.’

‘She reckons without her host, I guess,’ said Gasper, with an intelligent glance at his brother priest; but Swinderby returned it not, for, whatever was the matter with him, there was a deadly paleness in his countenance, with which the prelate’s familiar was not sufficiently acquainted to mark the change.

The confessor, however, aroused himself, and, addressing Julia, said with great earnestness, ‘Daughter, are you still disposed to cling to those doctrines that have wrought you this trouble?’

‘The doctrines are true and holy, and they have wrought

me no trouble,' she observed. 'The cruel machinations of the enemies of the truth have worked this trouble. The more I consider the doctrines I believe, the more I love them, and I hope to confess them at my dying hour.'

Swinderby looked like a man making a violent effort to swallow something. Julia stood at a little distance; he now crossed the small apartment, and came quite close to her. 'Let me feel your pulse, daughter,' he said; 'I think you are feverish.' He took her hand in his, and having contrived to place himself as far out of Gasper's hearing as possible, he turned his back to him, and, bending his head as if earnestly considering the quick and intermittent pulsations, whispered, 'I beseech you control your expressions in the presence of that man, and trust me for the rest.' Then instantly dropping the hand, he turned again to the prelate's familiar. 'Your prisoner is not in a state to be questioned just now,' he said. 'She is feverish. I think you have erred in putting our daughter here into this confined place. I know something of her constitution, and I am sure you will never accomplish your wishes by the means you are using.'

'As to that,' muttered the familiar, 'it does not matter much how she is disposed of—one way or another.'

'I cannot think of holding further converse with her now,' said Swinderby; 'our interview has been short, but we shall leave her for the present; I would speak again with his grace.' He saw that Julia was greatly shaken in her bodily frame, and he did fear the consequences; but her mind was sound enough. He had his own reasons for cutting short his visit.

The Archbishop granted a conference immediately, and Swinderby gave him to understand that he could not venture to harass the prisoner with questions; that she was unequal to endure the sort of treatment to which she had been subjected, lenient as it might be considered; and that

the sight he had now obtained of her satisfied him, that the best possible thing to be done was to send her away without delay. If the lady's conversion was the object of her detention, he was of opinion such means as they used would never accomplish it.

The prelate was well pleased to be thus persuaded to do that which he had already determined upon; but he pretended to be in doubt as to the soundness of the confessor's arguments, and the expediency of acting by his advice; and Gasper, taking advantage of his patron's seeming indecision, brought out the happy thought that had occurred to him in Julia's apartment.

'If Sir Henry Pierrepont could be persuaded of the deep contumacy of his sister,' he insinuated, 'he would doubtless see it right to give her up to your grace's guidance. Suppose she is kept where she is till our brother tries what he can do in this?'

'That is a good hint, Gasper,' said his grace.

Swinderby seemed in horror. 'I beseech you not to think of such a plan,' he cried. 'I know Sir Henry too well to imagine he could be worked upon in that manner. Depend upon it, if suspicion of such a manœuvre should cross his mind, it would be sufficient to drive him directly contrary to your wishes. These Pierreponts may be led, they will not be driven; and as your grace wishes to deal gently with your prisoner, let her depart to her home even now. The expressions of your grace's fatherly desires may move Sir Henry,—the other method, never. He is a true son of the church; but his sister's disappearance hath so irritated him, that I know the task your grace would assign me would be hopeless.'

'You must be aware,' said the dignitary, 'that we are not in the habit of considering what may be agreeable to the relations of heretics, as to their disposal—duty is our rule. If we suffered our thoughts for a moment to revert

to the feelings of Sir Henry Pierrepont, it was simply matter of courtesy, and our gentle treatment of his sister arises solely from our clemency, which alone inclines us to listen to your suggestion.'

The prelate was apparently half persuaded by Swin-derby's arguments; but he somehow felt very uncomfortable about the confessor. He told him that he would consider the matter, and let him know the result of his decision in the evening. This was mere matter of show, for in reality the Archbishop's mind was already made up; and the only further exertion he had now to make, was to give a plausible colour, in his despatches, to the whole transaction. In his private letter to the Superior of the convent, he suggested that Swin-derby should be replaced in his situation at Pierrepont Manor by some other individual, if that could be managed, for he affected to have formed a very low estimate of his talents; and his negligence, he said, was sufficiently manifest. Strict injunctions were given respecting Blondel, who was to be closely watched. The prelate settled it in his own mind that Sir Henry must feel much obliged for the clemency he had exercised; but when the letters were finished and sealed, he nevertheless felt relieved that he was so far emancipated from his unpleasant guardianship of Julia Pierrepont.

Father Swin-derby became uneasy, as hour by hour flew past. Ignorant of the dignitary's decision, and believing him sincere in wishing for a little time to consider his proposal, he feared lest anything might occur to prevent Julia's liberation. He much wished to see her alone; but he knew it would not be wise to make such a proposal, at least until he had the Archbishop's final answer. His deep dejection and absence of mind were not unobserved; but they were attributed to sorrow at the obstinate heresy of one in whom he was interested, coupled with annoyance at the accusations likely to be heaped upon himself in con-

sequence. At all events, Lambeth seemed by no means agreeable to him ; and when he was informed that it was the pleasure of the prelate he should depart on the morrow, as soon as he pleased, accompanied by the lady, he seemed quite a different man. The Archbishop did not admit him to another interview ; but this was no disappointment to the confessor : he was entirely satisfied when the somner delivered him the packet for his superior, sealed with the Archbishop's seal, and told him he was at liberty to provide for the conveyance of himself and his charge forthwith ; but on no account should he be permitted to hold any communication with her, up to the hour of their departure. It was late when Swinderby received his orders ; but he went immediately to secure a horse for Julia's use ; he had great fears she might not be able to travel so far and so fast as he desired. No creature was astir in the palace when he arose and equipped himself, after a sleepless night ; and Gasper grumbled excessively when he was awakened to deliver up his charge. Without rising, he shoved the key to Swinderby, saying he had already had more than enough of trouble, and would take no more ; he knew where to find the prisoner, and might fetch her out himself. Nothing loath, the confessor found his way to the Lollards' Tower, and with emotions not to be described, opened the door of Julia's prison. She was considerably alarmed, for the morning light was not yet sufficiently advanced to allow her to distinguish the features of her visitor, and she had not been given to understand that she was to obtain her liberation.

'Do not be alarmed, my child,' said Swinderby gently. 'I am not—I never will be your jailer.'

'This is a strange hour to come,' she cried, recognising his voice, 'after being at Lambeth so long, without seeing me again.'

'But you have dwelt in my thoughts ever since,' he re

plied. 'I had no liberty to see you, or it should not have been so. But there is no time, far less is this a place for explanation. I am come to take you home.'

She made no answer for a moment, and the confessor feared his communication had been too abruptly made. Julia had evidenced great nerve as long as she was under trial; she had borne threats and reproaches with fortitude; but she had, nevertheless, suffered very acutely, and, quite unprepared for the pleasurable tidings that now met her ear, she was unable to utter a word.

'Did you hear me, my child?' asked Swinderby. 'I thought I was the bearer of news that would delight you. Would you not wish to leave this dismal tower?'

'Wish to leave it!' she repeated; 'to go home, did you say? Oh! Mr. Swinderby do not deceive me.'

'I do not deceive you, my daughter,' he said, feelingly. 'Are you able to travel with me?'

'Oh, yes!' she answered; 'surely I am able. The fresh air would so revive me. What would I not give to get out of this horrid, horrid place! When, or how is this to be brought about? Has my brother heard of me?'

'I cannot enter into particulars,' he answered, 'at this moment; but we may depart as soon as you are ready. I would fain be on the road in half an hour.'

'Less, much less time will serve me,' she exclaimed. 'Oh! I wish I were outside these walls.'

'I shall then return for you almost immediately,' rejoined Swinderby; 'I go to have the horses saddled.' Julia had small toilet to make; thankful praise occupied the interval of the confessor's absence.

It was not long; and she emerged from her gloomy apartment, leaning on his arm.

She looked on either hand with a painful feeling of apprehension, as she once more went along through the staircases and passages she had traversed before, under

circumstances so much calculated to excite terror. Treading noiselessly, as if she was apprehensive of being challenged for an attempt at escape, she spoke not a word till fairly seated on her palfrey outside the palace gate. She then turned to her conductor and said earnestly—

‘How has this been brought about? everything seems mysterious to me. What is to be done with me next?—pray, do tell me.’

‘You are assuredly going to Pierrepont Manor,’ answered Swinderby; ‘but I must beg you will not question me at present.’

Julia was too well pleased to be assured she was going where she wished, and to feel the balmy influence of the morning breeze playing around her, to be very urgent; but there was still a degree of uneasiness upon her mind that she found it hard to conquer. She rejoiced in the freedom she had obtained so suddenly and so unexpectedly; yet she feared that some deceit might be lurking beneath the whole transaction. Her brother’s confessor was not a likely person to be chosen for such an office; she believed him to be a sincere and upright man, yet she knew the blind obedience required of every priest, which their oath demanded. She was not ignorant that they wielded a machinery so perfect for their own purposes, as to link in one unbroken chain convent to convent, however distant, and that so they were enabled to promote their ends, working into each other’s hands in the most mysterious, but certain manner. Thus reflecting, Julia now cast a look at Swinderby, now anxiously observed the direction in which he was leading her. After having crossed London Bridge, he asked her if she could ride a little faster, as he thought it would be well to get fairly into the country before the day’s bustle began in the streets. She was delighted at the proposal, and they were soon amid thickets and green fields.

By the time they arrived at the first halting-place, she was quite satisfied that they were travelling to the Manor by the most direct road. Swinderby proposed resting for an hour or two, for he was much afraid that Julia's strength would fail before she arrived at her journey's end, and he was most anxious to reach the house of Walter Dish. Julia made a shorter time serve for rest than he had imagined; the anxiety she felt to get on served her, for the time, instead of strength; and if she continued to progress as she had done, he hoped to arrive at the common by nightfall. When again upon the road, Julia once more applied to the confessor for a solution of the way in which she had been so unexpectedly liberated. He then told her as much as he himself knew of the case, which was not a great deal, for he had not been admitted behind the scenes. When he had concluded, he said very solemnly, 'My own belief is, that the Master you serve so disposed those into whose hands you fell, that they could not detain you if they would.'

She looked at him inquiringly, and waited for further explanation. She did not wait long before Swinderby resumed, saying, 'Now, I have satisfied your curiosity to the best of my ability; will you, in return, tell me some of your experience in that dreadful tower?'

'My experience of what?' she inquired.

'Your experience of the Lord's dealings with you,' answered Swinderby.

Julia was greatly astonished. This was so much more like a question that might have been put to her by John Beverley than by a popish confessor,—and she had learned to be suspicious.

'I see you doubt me,' resumed the priest, 'and I blame you not; but I beg an answer to my question.'

'It would take time, and perhaps more collectedness of mind than I possess at present,' she replied, 'to detail

my varied feelings. Indeed, I was often greatly perplexed, yet my experience of the abiding presence of Him who led his people through the wilderness, and by his outstretched arm delivered them from wondrous perils, was encouragingly great; and although I had no Bible there, I always remembered some suitable portion of the word, and I had no doubt upon my mind of the truths I was enabled to confess, and for which I was willing to suffer.'

'Cowardly—cowardly,' muttered Swinderby, in an undertone; but his companion caught the word.

'I did not feel a coward, I assure you, when I required the use of courage,' she said.

'Not you—I meant not you,' quickly rejoined the confessor. 'I have struggled and struggled again and again against conviction, but it will do no longer. A knowledge of the trials you endured, my blessed and gentle one, and the victory you obtained through the word of His testimony, for whose cause you were questioned, and finally, the sight of your solitary prison, have finished what my previous converse with you had begun.'

'What do you mean?' asked Julia, in amazement.

'Shortly,' said Swinderby; 'I have been in a state bordering upon distraction for many months past; but it is over. The restraints which bound me are broken; all that remains of the priest is the garment that covers me; a few hours more and I shall be free!'

Julia was unable to reply. They had slackened their pace so as barely to be moving along, and Swinderby proceeded, 'You cannot forget the many earnest conversations I held with you during a long period of time, and how I combated your arguments.'

'No,' she said, 'those days I shall never forget.'

'I strove,' he resumed, 'to bring you back to the Church of Rome, dear child! You were made the means of bringing me into the Church of the first-born, as I trust.'

'Are you in earnest—can this be truth?' ejaculated his companion.

'I am in solemn earnest,' he replied. 'The bondage of that idolatry my heart loathed has racked and tormented my conscience, till my body has been thus worn and emaciated. My deluded brethren believed this to be the result of macerations, vigils, and other fruitless and superstitious observances. These unprofitable exercises I did practise in my anxious but ignorant search after holiness; but the appearances which attracted the notice of my brethren were the product of my inward conflicts. Tongue cannot reveal what I felt when the prelate's mandate arrived, and I became aware of your imprisonment, nor convey to your understanding the feelings with which I undertook the errand committed to me. I never was so tasked, as how to get through my visit at Lambeth; and I am sure I must have exposed myself to observation. Had they carried out the proposal made of putting you on another trial in my presence, I should not have been here now; my treason to the great apostasy had been made sufficiently manifest.

'I was not permitted to see you alone; and I am again at a loss for words to tell how I felt when ushered into your presence by that lynx-eyed Gasper. My limbs could scarcely support me, when I forced myself to speak to you. You remember, perhaps, the question I put. I asked it because I wished to be convinced of the power of your principles, and if you adhered, through good and bad report, to the doctrines you so long, and so warmly professed. You made me such an answer as went to my heart; its simplicity and sincerity touched me deeply. But, oh! I reproached myself with drawing forth, in presence of an observer, expressions that might be again produced, as evidence against you. At that moment the stratagem occurred to me of feeling your pulse, that I

might divert, if possible, the attention of Gasper; and indeed I was not mistaken in calling you feverish. You were no doubt surprised by my abrupt appearance, and equally abrupt departure; but I was constrained to hurry from your presence. How I should have rejoiced in an opportunity of disclosing to you the heavy burden of my heart! I could at that moment, as I thought, joyfully have borne the reviling of all the idolaters in London, and given myself willingly to the fires of Smithfield; but I knew that a premature discovery of my belief would neither serve the cause, nor you, nor myself: it was therefore my duty to refrain. But how I loathed myself for my former indecision and pusillanimity! There is no class on whose minds superstition lays such binding chains as on a conscientious priest; he has imbibed doctrines, until they seem part and parcel of his existence. He has taught them to others, until he is not able to call in question the most startling. His character is at hazard; in short, nothing, oh! nothing, save divine irresistible grace, can draw his feet out of the miry clay, and set them upon a rock, establishing his goings.¹ I know not whether I excited suspicion. I am sure the prelate and his familiar formed a very sorry opinion of me; but it matters not now, I am never more likely to rise in their esteem.'

'This is indeed joy coming in the morning after a dark night of sorrow,'² said Julia, while her eyes overflowed at the narration of the confessor; 'but what do you returning to the monks of St. Augustine?'

'I return to them no more,' he answered. 'I have already mentioned that Blondel is to meet us at the house of Walter Dish, and there we part. I wear under this garb a secular habit. Your safety once seen to, dear lady, Priest Swinderby and William Swinderby part company

¹ Psa. xl. 2.

² Psa. xxx. 5.

for ever, and I go to preach the glad tidings of great joy—to proclaim the liberty of the gospel to those who will hear—come persecution, come death !’

It will not seem surprising, that after so solemn a disclosure as this, the conversation of the travellers was not renewed for some time, except in broken sentences. Now and then, the confessor expressed his deep self-abasement, that he should have so long resisted the voice that had so loudly called upon him to come out and be separate. Julia was no less filled with wonder, that she should be made the humble instrument of so blessed a work, while she had only been endeavouring to defend her own belief, by the words of inspiration, from the attacks of one so deeply read, so skilled in philosophy. How little she had imagined, that while in past times he had been the chief promoter of their argumentative conversations, from which, indeed, her modest opinions of herself made her rather shrink, the teacher of others was becoming her scholar—the priest her disciple,—her disciple ! ah, no; in the living Word had been the power.

The most wonderful part of the history was, how the bitterest hours she had ever spent should be made, not only to strengthen her own faith,—for this seemed their legitimate consequence,—but the means of accelerating so wonderful an event as that which had just come to her knowledge.

To minds so occupied, the way did not seem long, though Swindery greatly feared the effects of excitement, so varied and so protracted, on his justly endeared companion.

‘Have you any plan in view to guide your future proceedings?’ at length inquired Julia.

‘None, save to follow the pillar and the cloud,’ he replied. ‘When the disciples were sent out without scrip, or purse, or change of raiment, they lacked not anything.’¹

¹ Matt. x. 9, 10; Luke xxii. 85.

The lighter we are, the more easily we travel ; and I am content to trust to Him who disregards not even the raven's cry.'

'As you have no plan otherwise,' she said, 'I can tell you where you may find friends. Do travel to Ashley, tell there what you have done for me. I know there are some who still remember Julia Pierrepoint, and will joyfully welcome you.'

'Think you so? Shall I gain admittance so unsuspectedly among such—I, who in times past have been so much worse than unprofitable? I would gladly join myself in fellowship with the band of Christian brethren where you lived ; it would comfort me to have a destination at present.'

'Ah! there was a time when I could promise you a kind reception in the mansion,' she observed, 'but strangers inhabit it now. There is, however, a cottage, about two miles distant from it, among the hills which rise immediately behind the house of Ashley ; a family dwells there, whose roof has for many years sheltered occasionally the wandering Wycliffite preachers, and I am sure my name is not so entirely forgotten, but that a friend shall be admitted on the strength of it, who shall be retained, and welcomed back on his own account, and for his work's sake be esteemed.'

'I thank you—I heartily thank you,' said Swinderby ; 'this is an additional debt of gratitude I owe you, and the prospect of a stated resting-place is rendered peculiarly reasonable for the sake of another. I have one on my mind, whose future prospects are dark enough, and who can no longer be in safety at Pierrépoint Manor—I mean your page, Blondel. You are aware that he has been denounced by that unhappy girl Rachel Brackenbury ; the friar that came to take me to London, carried an order to have him watched. If he stay where he is, he

cannot long escape the snare. Think you he would take his chance and join with me? he could hear of me, by your kind arrangement, at Ashley. I would undertake to instruct him sufficiently to make him a useful teacher; and I see not, except by flight, how he can escape. You may remain without molestation for the present; for with all the disguise that was used, I suspect there were political reasons for your dismissal. The changing times may, by the good pleasure of Him who ruleth over all, bring about events which shall leave you in peace; but poor Blondel! no reasons are likely to screen him from the storm which is gathering around him.'

Julia had never contemplated parting with Blondel, and she did not wish to betray in her words, how and why she shrank from the idea. 'I do not know,' was her reply; 'Blondel must be consulted. I should not desire him to remain under such a risk, and yet—'

'I think there is no choice,' resumed her companion; 'I am myself the bearer of letters to the Superior of the convent, which, I doubt not, refer to his case, as well as to yours. These letters shall never reach his hands. I break no seals to discover their contents; but when William Swinderby is about to doff the priest's gown, he will deem it no sin to commit to the flames the letters with which the priest was charged, urging the persecution, as they doubtless do, of those he now calls his brethren and sisters in one common bond. But the place of the lost document will be supplied by others; all that can be gained by their destruction is a short delay, and in that time Blondel must make up his mind. I expect to find him waiting at the common; and while you repose there he shall return to carry to your brother the tidings of your arrival. My own plan is to cross the country, getting into a district where I am not known, as speedily as I can. I must take advantage of the interval, before

the fact of what will be called my apostasy shall become known at the monastery. If Blondel wills, he may now have a clue by which to trace me ; if not, each must seek for grace to bear the cross in the way and place appointed.'

Although they had stopped at intervals during the day, and though Julia was well accustomed to ride, she was quite fatigued when they arrived within a few miles of their intended halting-place, and it was at a slow rate they proceeded the remaining distance. The sound of their horses' feet was heard, however, by a listening ear, and a hand laid hold of Julia's bridle as she approached the house ; it was Blondel's. He looked at the exhausted countenance of his mistress, he looked at Swinderby, as he said, 'Oh, madam, my master is in a dreadful state about you.'

'I cannot move a mile farther ; I wish I could,' she said.

'There is no need of your further exertion,' observed Swinderby ; 'Sir Henry shall have tidings of you faster than you could travel at any time. I shall arrange all these matters with Blondel, and nothing remains for you to do but to take your rest till your brother comes here to fetch you.'

She was quite unfit to consider anything herself, and she was glad to leave every arrangement in the hands of Swinderby. He, on his part, had just one other use to make of the priestly character ; it was to bespeak the best attentions of the hostess for his charge. He was aware that his injunctions would be, in her view, binding and imperative, and he accompanied Julia into the house. The landlady was informed that the lady alone of the party was to remain with her, and that in the morning Sir Henry Pierrepoint might be expected. He was known at the hostelry, though they had never before seen his

sister. After the hostess had left them, Swinderby pulled out the packet committed to his care by the Archbishop's somner, and putting it deliberately into the fire, sealed as it was, he said, as he watched its consumption, 'Thus perishes my last connection with the Church of Rome!' There was a pause of several moments. 'This was a solemn thought,' he observed; 'but I wish you to know that I am entirely satisfied with the step I have taken; and now I have one favour to ask at your hands, it is that you will bear a message from me to your brother. Tell him how deeply I am convinced of the errors of that church which I have now renounced for ever,—tell him that, as his confessor during several years, I owe it to him to declare that it was grievous sin in me, that it were so in any mortal man, to pretend to forgive or absolve from sin. Tell him that those sins he confessed to me, from the first to the last, lie unforgiven, until he, as a wretched, conscious sinner, goes to the Fountain where alone they can be purged away, where alone he can wash and be clean. I was faithful to him to the best of my knowledge; but it was a faithfulness unfruitful to his soul and to my own. Since I began to doubt the grounds on which the church to which I belonged stood, One only there is that knows the anguish of heart with which I visited him each time, the fearful throbbing of conscience which accompanied every act of idolatrous worship: none, oh, none but such as have groaned under a burden like mine, can know the charm of being admitted into that liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. Tell him I conjure him to come out from the captivity of Babylon; it is my parting message. It shall be my daily and nightly prayer that he may get eyes to see, and ears to hear. And now, dear lady, dear child, fare you well. May you—yes, I know you shall—obtain strength to bear all the trials that may await you.'

Julia was much affected. 'Am I then to see you no more?' she asked.

'I know not,' he answered. 'It is likely not, till after we have crossed the narrow stream that divides time from eternity. Then we shall meet, may I humbly say in joy, if so be we endure to the end. We may meet in this pilgrimage; in spirit at the throne we may—doubtless shall—often. In such a case, at such a time as this, mere human words are empty things; therefore, not in these I take my leave.' He stretched his hand over her head, and in a tone of deep solemnity pronounced an apostolic benediction. No words of his own followed this affecting act; he hurried from her presence, and leaving the house, retired to a solitary spot, where he was some time engaged in an exercise no mortal ear heard.

After this he sought for Blondel, and led him back to the same place. There it was that he gave him an outline of the strange events of the last week, and of the not less surprising fact of his own change of mind and purpose. He gave the page to understand that he was himself not only an object of suspicion, but that he was marked out for immediate persecution; and he concluded by asking him if he could make up his mind to cast in his lot with him.

Blondel was greatly perplexed. The proposal was very serious; it was made with startling abruptness. The ultimate prospect of being fitted to preach the gospel was a bright one, and he knew that those who had the greatest interest in him would rejoice in it. He was convinced, from the confessor's statement, that there was no safety for him at the Manor; but he felt as if to leave it thus were to desert the post assigned him by the master who had placed him there, and whose wishes were still as much commands to him as when he was present. Swinderby sympathized in his perplexity. 'My son,' he said, 'we are here in the corner of a quiet and solitary wood; we shall



“He stretched his hand over her head, and, in a tone of deep solemnity, pronounced the apostolic benediction.”—Page 184.

kneel and ask counsel of the only wise Counsellor. You shall then go to put Sir Henry's mind at rest.'

After the confessor had arisen from his knees, he said, 'You shall now witness me do for myself what my brethren would do for me with a mock and unholy solemnity. Here, under the bright arch of heaven, I doff my priestly garments, and become in appearance what I have long been in heart, an alien from the profession wherein I was nurtured. I hail the exchange with delight, as I acknowledge myself a member of that maligned and persecuted people who are scattered as sheep having no shepherd, though theirs truly is the Shepherd of Israel, who slumbers not nor sleeps. It is true, clouds and darkness are round about his throne; a dark cloud is certainly over his own church; nevertheless, He hath said, "I will turn mine hand upon the little ones;"¹ and He will gather them in safety, from the east, the west, the north, and the south. It matters not after what manner our passage may be from this present life. A fiery chariot carried Elijah to his rest; the gibbet and the steel have expedited the journey of many; but the grave consideration is not, how or where, but to be found watching.'

Long could Swinderby have spoken, for he felt like a man from whom a galling chain had fallen, and with the garments of the priest, he seemed to have cast away the fear of man and of death; the last fragment of the meshes of that net wherein he had been entangled were torn asunder, and he was surprised and humbled that he could have endured the bondage so long. But circumstances obliged him to be brief; he hid the priestly garment in a thicket, and, after taking leave of Blondel, pursued his way on foot, without returning to the inn. He travelled by the most unfrequented ways, treading with a lighter step than he had done for years. He stopped to rest where there appeared

¹ Zech. xiii. 7.

to be no chance of his being recognised ; and he expected to be well on his journey towards Ashley before his flight could be discovered.

Blondel returned to Pierrepont Manor as quickly as he could, agitated by contending emotions—joy at the restoration of his mistress, astonishment at the disclosures of the confessor, and hesitation concerning his own plans. He had no relations to oppose his wishes, or to be anxious on his account. He knew no friends but the Earl de Clifford, and the family where he now resided ; and could he but once see the Earl return to occupy his own place in the country, there remained nothing that could so fill up the measure of his wishes as to become a missionary. Until Swinderby had suggested it, he had never contemplated such an advancement, and he did earnestly desire to see his way clear in this important matter.

Musing in this manner, he arrived at the Manor, and speedily made Sir Henry acquainted with his agreeable intelligence. He said nothing of the confessor's extraordinary conversion, or flight, judging it prudent to avoid a whisper that might discover his escape until he had all possible time to be at a distance from the scene of his former history.

Henry was not long in being on the road to the common, taking with him a conveyance to carry Julia home. Like all persons of his temper and disposition, he could be pleased with nothing while labouring under his paroxysm of anger, and blamed persons and things indiscriminately, which, had he not laboured under a distempered mind, he must have been aware, could have no connection in any way with the subject of his grievance. He had blamed Blondel, he had blamed Wycliffe, he had blamed the family of Sir George Villiers, he had blamed Julia's religion. Nothing seemed right. He would not see Deborah, because she was a lollard ; he was equally pre-

pared to be angry at the priesthood, if it should turn out that they had any hand in this affair. In short, he was resolved that some party should have the full benefit of his hearty displeasure.

When Blondel first told him of his sister having been detained in the prison at Lambeth, his indignation knew no bounds, and no despised gospeller was ever blacker in his eyes than was his grace of Canterbury. It is true, he thought that Julia had no business to be where she was found; but whatever she might be pleased to do, he could not endure that her actions should be called in question by any one but himself. She still retained much of that influence over him she had early acquired: increasing age and intercourse with the world had so far lessened it, that he more rarely consulted her; but her brother still remembered, in cases of difficulty, that she was given to an exercise he not often practised—reflection.

He went to meet her, overjoyed at her being found, enraged at her persecutors, and yet determined she should be made aware that he was very much displeased with herself. In this strange humour he arrived before Julia had left her apartment. It was late, but, wearied and unwell, she had felt the necessity of repose. Henry's impatience to see her could brook no delay, and he sent a person immediately to announce his arrival. Julia had discovered the lateness of the hour, and was already dressed; and her brother almost trode on the footsteps of his messenger. Their meeting was, at first sight, a silent one. Julia hung in delight on his neck, and he, forgetting for the time that he had intended to be very angry, caught her in his arms, remembering only, that in her was concentrated almost every tie of relationship he had in the world. The next moment he said, 'I am very silly to be surprised into all this kind of nonsense, for I am very angry—I am, indeed!'

Julia had a good idea both of the nature and extent of his anger, and, smiling through her tears, she said, 'Nay, now Henry, you are glad to see me.'

'As to that,' he replied, 'it is your own fault that all this business has taken place; but I'll see to these matters for the future, I promise you. But, meantime, let us have some breakfast;' and he was hurrying out of the room, when Julia, laying hold of his arm, said, 'Now, I shall go with you, for I am quite ready.'

In a short time the substantial viands which composed the morning repast of the times, were set upon the table, and Henry, seating himself opposite to his sister, was perfectly delighted, although he made a ridiculous effort to seem grave. He had not noticed her appearance particularly before, and he now observed that she was looking extremely ill. This upset all his shallow philosophy, and, putting down the knife with which he had been about to begin his morning performance, he exclaimed, 'Why, Julia, you are like an apparition! I could not fancy a few days could possibly have had such an effect;' he placed both his elbows on the table, and fixed his eyes on her countenance.

'Never mind, dear Henry,' she said; 'a little quiet at home will recover me.'

But without paying any attention to her remark, he drew himself up in his chair, saying, 'By my word, but these mighty prelates take too much upon them! If I had known all, his grace of Canterbury should have sat uneasy in his archiepiscopal chair. I had taught him such a lesson as he never conned before. And Swinderby, too, he would not meet me here; but I shall have a clear account of his concern in this affair, or he shall never confess me again.'

'No! that he never will, Henry,' observed his sister, while a slight colour tinged her wan cheeks. 'It is not likely you shall see Swinderby any more.'

‘What do you mean, Julia?’ he inquired.

‘My dear brother,’ she answered, ‘your late confessor is no longer a member of the church in whose infallibility you profess to believe. He has become deeply convinced of her errors—he will never return to his convent again.’

‘How—how do you mean?’ asked Henry. ‘I did often of late think there was something odd about him; but certainly the world is turning upside down.’

‘He was labouring under the anguish of half-suppressed convictions,’ explained Julia, ‘while he meditated the step he has now irrevocably taken. He had no share in any thing that befell me, only that by his aid my deliverance was effected. He is by this time, I hope, far enough from hence to be comparatively secure; he is not likely to be missed by his brethren for twenty-four hours or so, and it will then be in vain for them to track the fugitive. Trusting to your honour, he had no objections to your being at once made acquainted with his circumstances, and he commissioned me with a parting message to you. He charged me to tell you that he will bear you continually on his mind in prayer, that you may see the real nature of the idolatry he has renounced, and, like him, flee from it. He bade me say that all your confessions to him were in vain, that the absolutions he gave were equally so, that he prayed that you might be brought to believe the pure and simple faith of the gospel, which the Bible alone teaches. It is no longer a sealed book in an unknown tongue, and there is no human authority that has a right to debar from the privilege of its perusal.’

Henry became grave and thoughtful; his sister’s communication seemed too remarkable for comment; and she was silent, to allow his thoughts to pursue their own course uninterrupted.

When Julia was seated in the carriage brought for her use, and found it stored with every comfort that could be

devised, she said, 'Henry, am I to judge by the comforts you have provided here how very angry you have been with me?'

'No person need judge by appearances,' he quickly answered. 'I thought you had some sense, until I heard of your being caught coming out of a miserable conventicle at a late hour in the streets of London. I thought the Archbishop of Canterbury a fine fellow till I discovered that he is what he is—a dastardly priest,' he muttered in an undertone; 'but we shall have all these odds made even one of these days,' he added more loudly. 'Meantime, as the wise folk think, we are likely to have work enough upon our hands by and by. Heard you of the marriage of the Duke of Clarence to the Lady Isabella Neville?'

'No, I was not likely to hear of anything the world was doing in my den,' she replied.

'The Earl of Warwick is believed to be scheming deeply then, and England will be in a flame again ere long. What say you to my wearing the white rose, Julia?'

'I am no politician,' was her cautious reply; 'you must of course judge for yourself.'

'And I have done so,' he said; 'I hold no more by the fortunes of the house of Lancaster.'

This was the first intimation of her brother's decision; but she could not be surprised at it after the length of time he had spent amid the attractions of the court. They were both ignorant of the effect of this new political engagement upon her release.

There was great rejoicing at the Manor to see their lady safely returned. The faithful in Sir Henry's household thought it a vast pity that she should be a heretic, and they of course believed that the Archbishop of Canterbury had quite a right to do in all cases exactly what he pleased. But it was matter of satisfaction that their mistress was

thus restored, and some of them had hopes that they might yet see her go to mass after her visit to Lambeth. At all events, they were glad to have so much reason to believe that she could not be very far out of the pale of salvation, for she had not come home in this manner, they thought, if the prelate had not obtained some satisfaction on the subject of her faith. They were not much surprised at the result of Rachel's examination, for they suspected that she merely had professed herself a Wycliffite to find more favour in the eyes of her mistress. This was not a just accusation; many a stouter heart and better-informed judgment than hers shrank, panic-struck, from the ordeal of prelatie inquisition.

When the agitation of feeling produced by the recent events subsided, Julia and her brother talked over the particulars of her late painful adventure without restraint. She gave him a distinct narrative of it, omitting only the mention of some of those controversial points on which she had been questioned; and this she did only because she was aware that he had never seriously examined the subject, and therefore was unqualified to judge.

Henry listened to the account she gave with intense interest; he evidently resented in his heart the tyranny of that church to which family pride and prejudice induced him to adhere. He recalled to mind the days of other years; he remembered how he used to attend the preaching of John Beverley; how Reginald De la Pole had told him of the preciousness of the Bible. He thought little of these matters at the time—how little was clearly proved by the result. The manner of his education, nevertheless, caused him to retain a large share of toleration for the despised lollards, while his sister's firm adherence to their principles, and his subsequent intercourse with De Clifford, had greatly strengthened these feelings.

Julia knew that her brother's natural disposition would

have led him to seek redress for her wrongs; she also knew that it would be in vain to question the spiritual authority that held despotic sway over a deluded land. Her chief desire in the matter was, that he might obtain a clearer view of the unholy and unscriptural nature of the Church of Rome, for his soul's sake;—how she should rejoice in her recent sufferings were they overruled for such an end!

The emancipation of one individual had been already hastened, for Swinderby might have lingered on a little longer, the victim of indecision and self-condemnation, but for her strange imprisonment.

Henry was much struck by his confessor's change, and he determined that he should not appoint another in his place for the present. He became almost as anxious as Julia herself that Swinderby's flight might not be immediately discovered, so that not a whisper escaped from any one of the three individuals who as yet alone knew of it. Sir Henry was annoyed that it was not in his power to do anything to convince the prelate of his high displeasure; his inactivity seemed to justify the inference that he was satisfied, and this was not easy to bear. But he well knew that the dignitary of the church cared nothing for his opinion. England groaned under the thralldom of the church; the power of her prelates had been resisted more than once, both by kings and barons; but seldom for the redress of private wrongs. It was when their rights had been publicly invaded, or their purses emptied for the benefit of foreign priests, or domestic tyrants. Sir Henry was therefore obliged to control his resentment, and to bear his bitter feelings with what patience he could.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN the time Swinderby had been expected to return had passed by, and an additional day brought no intelligence to the monastery, a good deal of surprise was excited in the breast of the Prior. The nature of the confessor's errand to London made the anxiety for his return the greater, and the further commands of the Archbishop were expected with impatience. To make any inquiry at Pierpoint Manor would betray a premature knowledge of matters, concerning which more information was first desirable; and these reasons so far benefited the former brother, that full time was afforded for his escape and comparative security before either the fact of his flight or its reasons could be discovered.

Tired of fruitless conjecture, the Prior at length wrote to Lambeth, and when his despatch came to hand it occasioned no small stir in the prelate's confidential conclave.

An answer was returned forthwith, together with a duplicate of the letters entrusted to Swinderby. The strictest possible injunctions were added, to make inquiry for the priest; 'for,' his grace observed, 'there was no fathoming the wickedness of those heretics!' But in a case like the present, all conjecture was at fault. The confessor had left Lambeth, accompanied only by the

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lady, and she had arrived at home in safety, while no tidings of him had been received.

The Prior's exemplary patience was now entirely exhausted; and having perused the letters from Lambeth, he made known their contents to his monks, and a rigorous inquiry was set on foot. One of the brethren was first sent to the house of Walter Dish, where they heard Swinderby had arrived. All the information gathered there was that the confessor had been seen to leave the house in company with Sir Henry Pierrepoin's man Blondel, and that the page had returned alone in about an hour after.

They asked no questions, as they supposed the holy man had proceeded on his way, and they had not suspected anything unusual in his disappearance. The priest returned to his superior with his scanty information; and suspicions, dark as they were vague, were speedily excited. Every exertion must be made to unveil the mystery of the brother's fate. The faithful were aroused throughout the whole neighbourhood; but no further information crowned their efforts, except that some one had observed the confessor and the serving-man going towards the neighbouring wood. But every one thought it their duty to do something, and zeal was soon rewarded by the discovery of Swinderby's discarded vestment, found where he himself had cast it. The garment was triumphantly carried to the priory, and created considerable dismay. Had then the brother laid violent hands upon himself? Such a supposition could not be entertained for a moment. Had he suffered at the hands of others? If he had been murdered, why should his gown, unrent and bearing no marks of violence, be thus thrown by? However the case stood, it was time to do something; and a stern and curious eye was cast upon Blondel. As a denounced heretic, he was at any rate to be taken through hands; but here was

something of another nature that demanded investigation. He must be brought to give his evidence on the recent occurrence, and the extreme vengeance of the Romish Church now hung over the head of the devoted page.

While the priesthood were pursuing these investigations, Blondel was the subject of great perplexity. Although he little dreamed of the real nature and extent of the danger that threatened him, he was well aware that his situation was a very unsafe one. He was desirous to follow Swinderby, but he felt very unwilling to depart from the vicinity of his mistress. He was as much concerned at the darkening prospects which overshadowed her path, as he was for the danger that hung over his own head. How he could serve her by remaining where he was, seemed not very obvious; but he could watch over her interest in his humble capacity, and he should at least not be ignorant of her subsequent fate.

He had no friend to consult, and was moved backwards and forwards in a state of indecision. How long he might have so continued is uncertain, had not busy rumour hinted a new cause for prompt action. The search after Swinderby, of course, soon became known at the Manor, and Blondel heard that his name was associated with the proceedings, in a manner by no means agreeable. He knew that a fair investigation would fully relieve him from any unpleasant accusation, but such the Wycliffite had no reason to expect: it was but too evident that his only safety consisted in departing from the neighbourhood; he had not, however, acted upon this conviction before the Prior came to seek an interview with his master.

Sir Henry Pierrepont was in no humour to be pleased with any member of the fraternity. If he had not before regarded the priesthood with that superstitious devotion they were accustomed to meet, the late adventure of his sister had not raised them in his esteem. But the Prior's

visit could not be declined, and Sir Henry received him in a manner that certainly had less in it of warm cordiality than of cold civility.

There was embarrassment on both sides, and their conversation was mutually reserved.

The Prior, however, contrived in the most natural way possible, to introduce the story of Swinderby's extraordinary disappearance; and insinuated his suspicions of one individual, with his intentions of having an examination on the subject. Sir Henry could have revealed the whole truth of the matter, and he was aware that Swinderby must now be beyond the reach of present inquiry; but he determined that the Prior should be none the wiser for his information. He had no idea of being coaxed or entrapped into a confession of what he knew. He had a present grudge at the whole brotherhood; and, lastly, he felt himself placed in an awkward position as the depository of a heretical secret. The Prior was surprised that his auditor could listen to his narrative with so much coolness. He proceeded to put several questions in the most politic manner, but he could obtain no reply in the least satisfactory. Henry had not seen the confessor since he had gone to London, and this was all the querist could elicit; he was too cautious to mention the lady's name, and Sir Henry made no allusion to his sister. The Prior's mark was Blondel; but after some delay he despaired of the attainment of his object by any less direct means than a plain and open accusation of the page. He changed his tone somewhat, as he said—

'You are not aware, I presume, of the suspicion that is attached to a member of your household.'

'A member of my household!' repeated Sir Henry, contracting his brows slightly.

'Your man Blondel was at the house on the common,' explained the Prior.

'Yes, by my orders,' he quickly rejoined.

'But,' again said the Prior, 'I find that he was the last person seen in company with our dear lamented brother; consequently it is right and needful that he be questioned.'

'I am sure he knows as much of Father Swinderby as—as I do,' quickly observed Sir Henry.

'You do not know, I suspect, how little some of the people about you deserve your confidence,' remarked the Prior.

'I have no cause to question the fidelity of any of my domestics,' was the reply.

'You are not suspicious,' insinuated the churchman.

'Many things may be carried on beneath your roof without your knowledge.'

'Perhaps so,' answered Henry; 'but, reverend father, to be plain with you, I do not love hints and insinuations; therefore, if you have any information to give respecting members of my establishment that concerns me to know, I beg you will be explicit.'

'I came rather to seek than to give information,' answered the Prior. 'Your serving-man, Blondel, stands in a position that renders him liable to a foul imputation which I do not name; my object is to take him up for examination. Courtesy has induced me first to ask you to deliver him to me.'

The knight made sundry uneasy contortions, as he said, 'I think, reverend father, your inquisitions are stretched quite to the boundary line of prudence. I am not over fond of extrinsic interference, though I might be disposed to yield something to the authority of the church.'

'Sir Henry,' said the Prior, solemnly, 'the church in these unhappy times is forced to do violence to her tender feelings, for the safety of immortal souls; these are not the days in which to allow her natural gentleness to rob her of

her just prerogatives.' While he pronounced these words, he kept his eyes fixed on the countenance of his hearer, by which means his penetration discovered that his remarks were not making by any means a desirable impression. No reply was vouchsafed, and he continued, 'We have great reason to suspect this same Blondel of heretical pravity. Our departed brother could have best witnessed in this matter; his evidence is, alas! no longer available, but sufficient yet remains to serve our purpose. This household, notwithstanding all that has gone abroad on the subject, has remained hitherto unquestioned. We do not wish to accuse the departed,—doubtless, he judged for the best. But a case has now arisen that demands the interference of the secular arm, and in the name of that power the man must be arrested and brought to trial.'

Sir Henry knew right well that more was meant by the Prior's harangue than met the ear, the accusation of heresy was aimed at more than the page. He did not feel disposed, however, to enter into a discussion on that subject with the superior of the priory, and his knowledge of the falsehood of Blondel's accusation made him nowise concerned about the issue. But he had no knowledge and no suspicion of the machinery which worked behind the scenes in cases like this, and which usually ended in a tragical development. He considered not, that under colour of treason to the state, or some other crime of which the law could take cognizance, the church contrived to bring about the major part of her public executions; whilst in her private inquisitions, means never failed for preventing the destined victim from returning to the world to tell his woful tale.

'I have no doubt Blondel can explain himself to the entire satisfaction of any candid mind, with respect to Father Swinderby,' said Pierrepont.

'We find ourselves placed in very trying circumstances,' said the Prior. 'Our flock is assailed by false teachers, and

although their danger is so clearly perceptible to us, it seems to make but a faint impression on others—so faint, indeed, that our necessary interference appears hardly to be justifiable in their eyes; but this cross we must bear like our predecessors in all ages.'

Henry felt the full force of the Prior's remarks; they were pointed evidently at the late transaction, in which he was so deeply interested, fully as much as they related to present business—in all probability, they aimed at future plans. He writhed under the thoughts that crowded on his mind; and, if the person before him had been a layman, he might have suffered his natural impetuosity very probably to have so far overcome his politeness, as to have shown him a short and patent way of quitting his house. Had the Prior visited him before his sister's return, it is not likely he could have commanded his feelings; but he was now cool enough to reflect that his visitor was the Superior of the priory of St. Augustine, and he felt the impression of that mysterious tie which serves to bind in so extraordinary a manner the minds of men to a Machiavellian system of superstition, even when they are in no other way influenced by religion. The words which sought for utterance froze upon his lips. His countenance, however, betrayed his agitation, and his silence sufficiently indicated to the Prior that his visit had been sufficiently prolonged. It was no part of his policy to display to common eyes the motives by which he was guided, or the ends he purposed to attain; it was quite time to take his leave, if he meant to do it with a good grace; and very soon Sir Henry had the satisfaction of seeing the very reverend father leave his house.

Julia was speedily acquainted with the object of the Prior's visit. Her brother made the communication with rather an unusual assumption of dignity, as addressing

one, whose novel opinions were, in a manner, the procuring cause of so many annoyances.

The conclusions she drew were very different from his. He anticipated a full and open acquittal from an investigation into Bondel's conduct; nor did he for a moment believe it could be otherwise, knowing, as he did, the facts of the case. But Julia thought differently. She saw at a glance that artifice would be resorted to, and that no sooner should the charge on which he was to be arraigned be proved, by undeniable testimony, to be groundless, than the fact of personal heresy would be brought forward to secure the victim thus marked and denounced. It was clear that nothing remained for the poor page of the self-exiled De Clifford, than a somewhat similar fate to his master. She lost not an hour in conveying to him the tidings of his threatened persecution.

Blondel's decision was now no longer doubtful. The path of safety seemed for the present to be the path of duty; and his doubts and reasonings were at an end.

Julia quickly prepared some greetings for her ancient friends at Ashley; and before many hours elapsed, Blondel, with his pilgrim staff, was on the way thither.

Vicissitudes in those days were common occurrences; and Julia sat down to meditate on the singular chain of events which made her thus able to point out an asylum for two fugitives, who were obliged, for the sake of the truth they believed, to forsake all.

How endeared did Ashley seem to her recollections!—the scenes of her early days, the place where she had learned the value of her Bible. How gladly would she return to its hills, to live in quiet retirement near the graves of Reginald De la Pole and John Beverley, and amidst the surviving members of the little church! But such was not her place, and she had no doubt that she was exactly where she ought to be. The time past had been

marked by many strange events, that which lay before was perplexing and dark; but what had she to do with that? She was enabled to realize in her experience the comfort of relying on his care, who hath said, 'Take therefore no thought for the morrow.'¹

Her peculiar circumstances might be thought likely to produce a nervous tendency, to excite alarm at every unusual sound, to keep her in a state of constant agitation. It was not so, for sanctified adversity, like the mountain breeze, braces and strengthens. Times of national tumult call forth traits of heroism that otherwise would have lain dormant. Times of persecution produce examples of patient endurance, confiding faith, and devoted suffering, that in the calm sunshine of less troublous times cannot be known. There are, there ever will continue to be, an exemplification of these good fruits of the Spirit in the Christian church; but they are not always drawn into public view. The ground from which they stand out in strong relief is often discovered only by those who seek out the tried, and the tempted, and the poverty-stricken in their own abodes. There, in the midst of their family circles, or in the loneliness of an obscure hovel, will sometimes be found 'hidden' ones, who breathe the spirit of martyrs. The same seed will produce the same plant, the branches of the true vine will yield the same fruit. Under every peculiar trial, the needful strength to bear it will be unfailingly given. For great necessity there is great consolation; and those who have been hunted on the mountains for the confession of Jesus and His gospel, have invariably drunk deeply of the well of Bethlehem, and seen the rainbow of the promises shine with peculiar lustre.

Henry gave his approval to the step resolved upon by Blondel; but he was still anxious to exculpate him from the heinous crime with which he was so unjustly charged;

¹ Matt. vi. 34.

but Blondel could not be exculpated without a disclosure of Swinderby's apostasy. He did not choose to be the communicator of this fact; he was averse to his sister's appearance in the matter, and she saw it right, in this instance, to concur in his opinion. Blondel's flight seemed confirmatory of the worst suspicions; and even many who would have been slow to accuse him before, were now shaking their heads in unutterable wisdom. The page took his way northward, and although his absence was soon made known, his track was as undiscoverable as the confessor's.

After a journey of several days, he arrived at a market town where he purposed passing the night. His attention was attracted by a scene that was enacting at what appeared to be the cross. An individual was standing before it, encircled by a crowd of persons, whom he was addressing. He could not be one of the preaching friars, for he was simply attired in a lay habit. Blondel joined himself to the group, and to his joy and surprise recognised in the speaker the countenance of Swinderby. He was near the conclusion of his discourse, and was with great animation applying striking truths to the consciences of his hearers. The page whispered an inquiry at a man who stood beside him, when he found that all that was known of the preacher was his being a stranger in the neighbourhood, who had been of late bringing 'certain strange things to their ears,'¹ but how or where he lived they seemed not to know. Some of his hearers waited with patient attention to the very close of the discourse, evidently struck by the matter and manner of his address; but others, one by one, dropped away to seek some fresher novelty, or to drive a bargain. Blondel contrived so to place himself as to prevent his being seen by Swinderby, and in the enjoyment of this unexpected pleasure, he forgot the fatigue of a long day's journey.

¹ Acts xvii. 20.

The speaker charged his hearers to beware of trusting to deluding vanities for their souls' salvation, to remember that each individual among them must answer for himself, and that they were grievously deceived who blindly expected to stand acquitted through the mediation or absolution of a sinful creature like themselves. His closing words were these: 'Two books will be opened at the judgment: the first is men's conscience, that is now closed; the second is the book of life, which is Christ's living and doctrine. In the first shall be written all we have done; in the second all that we should have done. The condemned shall sing this song, written in the book of Lamentations—

" The joy of our hart is ago,
Our quiet is turned into woe;
The crowne of our head is fallen us fro,
Alas! for sinne that we have doe."

'But joy, and joy, and joy, to them that be saved; also joy, for their travail is brought to so gracious an end; joy, for they escaped the pains of hell; joy, for their bliss that they have in the sight of God.'¹

The preacher concluded abruptly, and threading his way through the assemblage, he darted rapidly into a lane and disappeared, not, however, unmarked by Blondel, who cautiously followed at a little distance. Swinderby went on briskly without observing him; he was soon beyond the town, and quitting the high road, he entered as quiet and solitary a dell as though there had been no human habitation within miles. He at last slackened his pace, and having just turned the corner of a projecting rock, was preparing to seat himself on the ground, when, for the first time, he observed that he was tracked. There was an instantaneous feeling of alarm, but it as quickly subsided when he was able to recognise in the way-worn and dusty traveller the spruce and tidy person he was wont to see at

¹ Note L.

Pierrepoint Manor. The recollection of their last interview was fresh in the confessor's mind, and, extending his hand, he said, 'My brother, hast thou then taken the pilgrim's staff?'

'You asked me,' replied Blondel, 'to cast in my lot with you; I have come to do so.'

'I bid you welcome,' cried Swinderby. Then, after a few moments, he added, 'To what shall I welcome you?—the shelter of heaven's canopy, the green-sward for a resting-place, and a share of my patriarchal feast.' He lifted a napkin which he had just deposited on the grass when he was overtaken, and unfolding it, he displayed the contents—a few dry cakes. 'Yet, my son, I welcome thee to better things than these,—though these are mercies which demand heart-thankfulness,—even to the enjoyment of the blessed inexhaustible Fountain where all fulness dwells, to the well-spring of immortality. I ask you no questions until we ratify our meeting, as we solemnized our parting, by prayer.' Renovated, apparently, rather than exhausted by his late exertions, Swinderby knelt down by his young companion, and this their first interview in their pilgrim life was hallowed by an exercise of deep and fervent devotion, imparting to their hearts a taste of such joy as the corn and wine of the world can never bestow on its votaries. They then sat down by a little rivulet, and there Blondel related all that had taken place concerning his own flight, and the painful suspicions which had hastened it. Swinderby's mind was at once made up as to the course he should pursue. He conducted Blondel to the cottage at Ashley where he had already made acquaintance, and there the page found a welcome and a willing auditory for all he had to tell of his lady's firm and constant testimony for the truth.

Swinderby resolved on writing a full account of his conversion, and sending it forthwith to his late brethren.


He was bound to exonerate the page from the dark stain that had been attempted to be fixed upon him; for his own part, he declared himself willing to seal his testimony with his blood. Nevertheless, he saw it to be his duty to remove himself for the present to a locality where he was personally unknown, and where he would publish the gospel so long as his Master permitted.

Some of his new friends undertook to have this letter sent to its destination, in a manner that could afford no clue to his retreat. The brethren were incensed beyond measure at the discovery of Swinderby's defection; and they took every possible measure to prevent the story from spreading. This was a termination to their investigations they had little expected; and it was far more grievous to them than had they been able to prove that their beloved brother was foully slain.

Swinderby and Blondel travelled up and down the country, sometimes together, sometimes separate, dwelling where and how they could. But after continuing this kind of life for some months, they agreed to go beyond seas,—Swinderby to visit the brethren in Bohemia, and Blondel in the romantic hope of discovering his former master. But we cannot follow them in their wanderings, for our story keeps us still on English ground, where political discord was preparing the way for fresh troubles and new trials.

The strange disappearance of Sir Henry Pierrepoint's sister had formed a subject of gossip for some time, but the particulars remained a mystery. Those immediately interested learned that she had returned to her home, and whispers went round that she held communications with persons of heretical opinions; but from the Archbishop of Canterbury's council no intimation of her adventures went forth. All parties concerned had their private reasons for keeping the secret, and the story died away.

CHAPTER XVII.

LTHOUGH King Edward had sufficient cause of alarm, and popular commotions were breaking out in different parts of the country, yet he seemed resolved to shut his eyes and ears to everything that threatened a disagreeable interference with his pleasures.

The state of the kingdom had an effect even on the dark seclusion of Clifford Castle. It was a changed place since our story last brought us within its precincts. From the time when the last of the gay assemblage that partook of the entertainment to Edward the Fourth had crossed the drawbridge, on their homeward way, a withering blight seemed to rest on all within. The Countess had suffered a reaction of feeling, violent in proportion to the strength of her emotions. The reins of domestic government, which used to be held so tightly, had been thrown aside, and the domains were allowed to run into such a condition that the beholder might doubt whether the castle claimed an owner, or held a tenant. Visitors soon fell away from a house where they experienced a gloomy reception, or from which they were suffered to depart without having seen the hostess.

A leader for the family retainers might soon be required; and the younger son would naturally assume the title so long unclaimed. There were many among the sons of the

peerage not much better qualified than Aymer to fulfil the ambitious expectations of their families, and though his mother strove to array him in those graces wherein he was deficient, her own strong sense contradicted the self-inflicted deception.

Many a plan had passed through the mind of Lady de Clifford to ascertain the fact of the Earl's life or death, all of them unsuccessful. There was but one place in England where the least information concerning him was likely to be had ; it was her belief that, if in existence, he would have contrived to communicate with Pierrepoint Manor. But how could she stoop to seek there intelligence denied to herself? or how could she, without a breach of decorum, assume that it was there to be found? The idea was put away as often as it presented itself; it was next to impossible for her to renew an acquaintance so uncourtously broken off by herself. She shrank, too, from exposing the hidden workings of her mind, and did not choose the world should know how deeply she repented of the part she had acted; people were at liberty to ascribe her sorrow and seclusion to any cause they liked but self-reproach.

It was no wonder, with so many reasons for delay, that a fifth year had nearly closed since her son's departure, and yet the half-formed project of a visit to the Pierrepoints remained in embryo. It might have done so for ever, had not certain manifestations of the coming storm begun to present themselves, and she would fain find a reason for throwing some obstacle in the way of a public act which would politically pronounce the heir of the De Cliffords dead, and his successor appointed. True, that successor was her own son; but so was he whom she had been the means of driving from his country, and of disinheriting of his birthright. Unless some tidings to give hopes of his being yet alive could be procured, it were

worse than useless to oppose the now declared wish of Aymer to be acknowledged, by court and camp, the head of his distinguished family. Long and painful was the struggle in the mind of the Countess, untold even to her confessor; but the mother's feelings at length rose triumphant over all others, and she came to the resolution of being herself the bearer of inquiries to *Pierrepoint Manor*, with which she would entrust none other. After all, there were nothing but difficulties in her path. Should she ascertain that her son was alive, nay, was even about to return to England, could she hope to see him espouse the cause of Edward of York? But the Countess had been led by her feelings and her passions in every important action of her life, and she was about to commit herself once more to the same guides. What was the white or the red rose now to her? what had they ever been? Nothing for the sake of those who claimed them as distinguishing marks, everything for the accomplishment of a favourite object; all others had now become secondary, in her esteem, to the one desire which absorbed all others; and could she but look on Howard de Clifford once more, she cared not in her heart what badge he might wear.

Since the commotion aroused by the disappearance of Swinderby and Blondel had subsided, nothing important had occurred at the Manor, but Henry's buoyant spirits were often partially depressed as he thought on his sister's clouded prospects. It was true, he was not well calculated to form a very correct estimate of the deep tide that flowed beneath the calm and quiet surface of her mind; but he had acuteness enough to mark, and affection to appreciate, how she was ever ready to sacrifice her own convenience and inclination to his, and he abstained from bringing before her any subject he imagined might prove disagreeable.

Julia was one day thrown into unspeakable embarrass-

ment by a servant announcing the Countess de Clifford; and scarcely could she believe the evidence of her eyes when, a few moments afterwards, she found herself receiving her unwonted visitor.

‘I am sure I find myself an unexpected guest, and probably an unwelcome one,’ was Lady de Clifford’s first remark.

Julia strove to recover her self-possession as she begged her ladyship would not call it unwelcome.

They were both changed since last they had seen each other. Julia Pierrepont was the pale rosebud expanded into the flower; her high arched brow indicated a vigorous and thoughtful mind, the soft expression of her eye the gentleness that tempered it; the fair and almost colourless cheek, from which the flush of temporary excitement soon vanished, seemed a record of suffering, and the general cast of her countenance bespoke patient resignation. These ideas passed rapidly through the mind of the Countess as she seated herself.

‘A mother’s feelings,’ she said, ‘have urged me to come hither. If Sir Henry Pierrepont knows aught of the fate of my long-lost son, I think he will not refuse the information I seek; and yet, I feel that an interview with him is more than I am able at this moment to bear.’ She paused, either unable to proceed, or sensible that she was trespassing on ground too delicate to justify her doing so. She had sheltered her inquiry under Henry’s name, but it was with his sister she wished to converse; and before Julia could muster courage to speak, her visitor, unaccustomed to the painful feeling of hesitation, resumed, saying, ‘You knew my son Howard; he has dealt unkindly with me; but wayward and undutiful as he has proved himself to be, I would learn if he still lives.’

Julia knew the accusations were unjust; but she recollected who it was that made them, and any attempt on her

own part at vindication might seem unbecoming; she therefore listened in silence, and Lady de Clifford continued, 'Although he has not chosen to afford me any information of his proceedings, I entertained the idea that he might not have thus treated others. Your brother was on terms of intimacy with him; and I think if you know anything to relieve my mind you will not refuse to tell me.'

The eyes of her auditor filled with tears as she answered, 'How glad I should be to have tidings to tell such as you desire, but I am entirely ignorant of any that would comfort you.'

'Say you so?' exclaimed the Countess; 'then my last hope is gone—he has ceased to exist.' She threw herself back in her chair, overcome with emotion; and Julia, ever willing to soothe the unhappy, eagerly said—

'Oh! no, there are many reasons to render his holding communication with England difficult.'

'Youthful spirits are sanguine,' observed the Countess, endeavouring to compose herself; 'but day-dreams no longer consist with my years. Yet, before I yield to the sad conviction that my first-born son shall never look upon me again, tell me, young lady, when you did hear of him, how he was, and where.'

It was plain Lady de Clifford still entertained the idea that Julia Pierrepont had some information to give; and although she had little cause for friendly feelings towards her, sympathy was at once awakened by sorrows too deep to be concealed, even in the stern and haughty bosom which bled under their infliction.

'I know nothing, indeed, of his fate, nor of his history, since he left Britain,' she said, with melancholy emphasis.

'I thought it had been otherwise,' remarked her visitor; 'but it seems I was mistaken, for I do not think you would deceive me in this.'

‘Truly, I would not,’ she responded. ‘But your son may yet return, for time is fast passing, and—’

‘And what?’ inquired the Countess, seeing her hesitate.

‘He did say,’ she resumed, ‘that if he lived, five or six years must elapse before his return,—the last of that time has not yet expired.’

‘Youthful visions again,’ said the Countess. ‘This country wears no appearance of being a fitting residence for him; he created a political storm for himself most unnecessarily. Why do I find myself hoping and wishing for a hopeless event? If he retains all the opinions he once held, he will scarce be a fit denizen of it, under any government. His views were very incompatible with his station. Among the low-born and illiterate there have been, and still are those—too numerous, alas!—who have embraced the opinions of that dangerous heresiarch Wycliffe; but a lollard in his rank is anomalous indeed.’

Julia thought this remark too personal towards herself to be quite courteous; but she only said, with much gentleness, ‘Perhaps, madam, if you were to inquire for yourself, you might be persuaded to think more favourably of Dr. Wycliffe’s teaching. I am satisfied, now that books are printing for us, they will do much to dissipate the prejudice that exists against such doctrines.’

‘A likely consummation!’ said Lady de Clifford, somewhat scornfully. ‘De Clifford would have made a different figure to-day, had he minded his hounds and hawks, and sought the society suitable to him, instead of poring over musty and forbidden tractations.’ Her feelings were easily excited on this subject, and she might soon have exceeded the bounds of propriety in her remarks; but the conviction that it was best at present to restrain herself recalled her, and she added, mournfully, ‘Except to holy church I have not until this day been half a mile distant

from my own house for nearly five years, and, after all, my journey hither has been fruitless enough.'

'But perhaps not altogether in vain, madam,' pleaded Julia; 'and I hope you will see no cause to repent it.'

The Countess had not expected to meet with anything in Pierrepont Manor to touch her heart; she had not reckoned on such a reception; she had not calculated on the meek influence of Julia's eyes, as they corroborated the words she spoke with the eloquence of truth; and she could not remain unmoved. It was then with somewhat corresponding tenderness she said, 'I have not come in vain, as I have renewed my acquaintance with one who I believe has sympathy for my sorrows. I wish—I wish you were not a gospeller; 'tis strange how you should have imbibed tenets so erroneous!'

'Can the Scriptures of truth teach aught but truth?' asked Julia. 'Nay, they are given by Him whose Word they are, to enlighten the darkest mind, and instruct the most ignorant.'

'You are in error, grievous error,' said the Countess. 'Know you not how that false notion of heretical Wycliffe was controverted by a learned and pious divine, when he said, that to give the Bible to the laity was casting pearls before swine?'

'He paid a poor compliment to our understandings,' replied Julia. 'But, dear madam, do but read it, and judge for yourself.'

'I know my duty better,' said Lady de Clifford; 'and believe me, these fingers of yours would be better employed in embroidering an altar-cloth than in turning over the leaves of a book fraught with danger, and teeming with doctrines quite beyond your comprehension. If England were once delivered from the dread effects of civil war, a strict examination into such matters will doubtless be renewed. The hands of our clergy have been, in a

measure, tied up for some time by the state of the country; but depend upon it, their zeal will again kindle the fires that used to consume heresy.'

'There is One, overruling all events, who can make the wrath of man to praise Him,' said Julia.

In the emotion of her feelings the Countess had gone closer to Julia. She now drew back, as if fearful the sudden impulse had carried her too far, when she remembered how deeply her companion was tinged with the sin of heretical pravity. 'These are new times,' she said, 'when noblemen, who should be studying Sir Launcelot, betake themselves to priests' learning, and ladies undertake controversy. What would our fathers have said to such degeneracy?'

'It is very possible,' pleaded Julia, 'that you hear accusations of a persecuted people which they never merited. I am aware that monstrous articles of belief are attributed to Dr. Wycliffe which he never held; and truth, thus maligned, is glad to hide in corners, when those who sit in high places seek to crush it, and mar the reputation of those who believe neither more nor less than what the Bible teaches them.'

Lady de Clifford shook her head. 'I have heard arguments like these before,' she said; 'but I came not here to talk of divinity; it was another subject that prompted me; and although my hopes have been disappointed, my feelings lead me to recur to it. I shall talk again to you of my son—of Howard de Clifford. I cannot but sorrow over his mysterious fate. A mother's pride may make me partial; but when I looked on the families around, I did feel proud as I turned again to my own hearth, for among all the scions of our nobility, in many respects, I know none to compare to him.' An unwonted tear trembled in the eye of the speaker, and Julia leaned her head on her hand and wept.

The Countess regarded her for a few moments in silence, then gently touching her shoulder, she said, 'I did not mean to distress you; but these tears of yours have melted me more than I thought was possible. I have not been used to companion with spirits like yours, and I thought I could not have been thus moved. I thought the source of my own tears was dried up,' and she wiped away the fast-gathering drops.

Julia was sorry she had been so overcome, and felt confused, when, looking up, she saw Lady de Clifford's marked countenance fixed on hers, with that sort of earnest gaze that bespoke a very different kind of interest from what she had evinced at her first entrance.

'Oh! I hope you will excuse me,' she faltered; 'a great many thoughts came over me at once, and I could not help it.'

'Excuse you!' repeated the Countess; 'I have nothing to excuse,—but you have much,' she added in an undertone; then she said a little louder, 'Were you ever told that I bore you malice?'

'Never indeed,' answered Julia, earnestly.

'I thought such a thing might have reached your ears,' she observed; 'and I adverted to it to assure you that if I did, I do so no longer; and I entreat you so to believe.'

'It is easy to believe what I desire so much,' said Julia. 'I should indeed grieve to be the cause of one painful thought to you.'

Lady de Clifford soon reverted to the subject nearest her heart, remarking, 'You told me a little while since that my son spoke of a return in five or six years; what do you imagine may have made him fix upon so distant a period?'

Julia was silent, and the Countess appeared rather to be searching the depths of her own mind for a reply than

expecting one from her auditor. She compressed her lips, and after a moment's pause, she said, as if settling the matter with herself, 'I do fear I know the reason,—the son of Margaret of Anjou will by that time have arrived at man's estate. Let me tell you, that I foresee dark and stormy days before you.'

'I trust I shall meet them in a right spirit,' was her response.

'Child,' resumed Lady de Clifford, 'that slight form of yours does not seem made to brave tempests, whose wind is the wrath of men, whose rain is life's blood, and whose thunder is their newly-invented instruments of destruction, vomiting fire and smoke. Some holy cloister seems the fittest shelter for such as you.'

'Ah! dear Lady de Clifford,' said Julia, 'know you not that there is a more secure shelter than any earthly abode could furnish, provided for those who place their trust in Him, under whose control is every event? They have a shield and buckler that cannot fail. I am not afraid.'

'Be it so,' responded the Countess, emphatically. 'I wish it may be so with you; but I pray your eyes may be opened to see the true faith. It is a pity a mind like yours should be perverted.'

'I am sure you speak to me in sincerity,' replied her hearer, 'and I, too, must bear my testimony for the truth I believe. I should indeed sin against light and experience, could I, by any means, be induced to deny it. I have had some trials in life, which had been at times almost overwhelming to a weak creature like me, but for the consolation I was enabled to draw from the words of eternal life. Had I continued a member of the Church of Rome, the Bible had been to me a sealed book, and I should thereby have lost such a treasure as the world could never furnish. Dear lady, do not look upon me as a pagan; I take my belief from the Scriptures alone, whose divine origin those

of your own creed do not deny, although they conceal them, and subvert their authority.'

'It is my thorough belief,' observed the lady, 'that every lollard obeys, by infatuation, suggestions which issue from the fountain of darkness. I am not speaking as a reviler, I speak in sorrow, because you have touched me as I expected not; and I would I could think of you as a member of the true flock.'

The subject was entirely dropped; yet the Countess lingered as if some spell riveted her to the spot. When at length she took her leave, Julia offered to accompany her a short way. She would not, however, suffer her to go beyond the grounds, and assuring her she should meet a conveyance that awaited her at a short distance, they parted.

Julia sauntered home slowly and unaware of being noticed, till a quick tread behind was speedily followed by the sound of Henry's voice.

'How now, my thoughtful sister?' he said; 'are you not sensible that the rain begins to drizzle? I think a smarter pace would be more suitable to the weather.'

'Does it rain?' she exclaimed, starting. 'Oh! she will get wet.'

'Who will get wet?' asked her brother.

'The Countess de Clifford.'

'Why, Julia,' he said, looking at her inquiringly, 'I do not understand you.'

'No, I am sure not,' she replied, taking his arm; 'but I shall explain. Lady de Clifford has just left me, and I can scarcely believe the evidence of my senses that we met and parted as we did.'

'And pray, how did you meet and part?' inquired Sir Henry, with a proud curl of his lip. 'Her ladyship has condescended greatly in conferring so much of her presence on my house.'

'Henry,' she said, 'her visit was drawn forth by circumstances that render her an object of sympathy. You may believe how much she endured before she came here to beg for tidings of her son.'

'She may thank herself for being placed in such a position,' said Henry; 'and I think an inquiry on such a subject at you was most unwarrantable. Having failed, of course, in the object of her mission, I suppose she will suffer us to vegetate as we did before, without bestowing her gracious inquiries how.'

'I do not know,' she responded; 'I did not think there was half as much softness in her composition as she manifested to-day.'

'Julia,' said her brother, affectionately, 'you possess in a wonderful degree the art of melting hard substances; but, I imagine, before you transform Lady de Clifford, you must study alchemy, put her into a crucible, and transmute the base metal into gold.'

'You will judge more kindly when I have told you all,' she observed, as they stepped into the house. 'I must claim your compassion, if not your affection, for the desolate.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON returning home, Lady de Clifford found that the effort she had made was too great for her decayed strength and shattered nerves. The information she had obtained was of a very unsatisfactory nature, but it was sufficient to confirm her in her resolution of opposing any decided step on the subject of the earldom to the utmost possible limit. Her visit had another effect: Julia Pierrepoint had laid a greater hold upon her heart than she was willing to own to herself. Why should it be so now, when she viewed her before with dislike? Those who have not experienced how words, even looks of sympathy, have penetrated the heart of the sorrowful, may think the sudden transition of Lady de Clifford strange and unnatural; but those who have been in the furnace of affliction, and learned the lessons there taught, will judge otherwise.

Lady de Clifford wanted a comforter. She had met with one who, she was sure, sympathized, and that in no common manner, in her woe. Slightly as she had touched the subject, and cautiously as Julia had responded, the Countess carried away the impression, that whatever place her son might have held in her affections, his adverse fortunes had wrought in her no change. But Julia Pierrepoint was a confessed heretic, one whom a faithful daughter of the Roman Church must believe to be fore-

doomed ; yet, even with this thorny obstacle in the way, Lady de Clifford had a strong desire to invite her to the castle, for the purpose of conversing with her more particularly. It might be, such a step would lead to her recovery from heresy. She had failed in her devices for the conversion of her son ; but Julia might not be proof against her arguments. These speculations occupied her mind for a few weeks. Poor Lady de Clifford ! with all her dignity, she was the slave of two masters : she was ruled by her own pride ; she bent submissively to the dominion of her exclusive creed. Her health, which for some time had been in a declining state, began to sink more rapidly, and the earliest of the winter storms so affected her, as to confine her, first to her chamber, and soon after to her bed. She imagined herself to be dying, and, under that impression, could no longer resist the wish to see Julia Pierrepont once more. A message was consequently conveyed, by her orders, to the Manor, to state that she was very ill, and doubtful of recovery, and begging that Julia would come to see her while yet in life. This was a request not to be refused ; even her brother offered no objections ; and, fearing she might be too late, the tender-hearted and forgiving girl made no unnecessary delay.

It was a long time since Julia had been within the gates of Clifford Castle. When last she had seen it, the bright tints of summer cast a softening shade over its harsher features ; the place now looked dreary enough on a day when early winter was contesting dominion with expiring autumn, and the last fragments of the faded garlands of a sweeter season were torn and scattered in the conflict. The rain and sleet, which had lately fallen in quantities, had increased the river to a great height, and the stream was rushing by with noise and impetuosity, bearing on its turbid waters the foam raised by their contention with rock and tree in their rapid downward course. The appearance

of neglect about the Castle was evident enough, but not so striking to the eye as in summer. The rank weeds were now prostrated by the frost, while the ivy, in its evergreen mantle, glittered in every faint sunbeam.

The solitude and stillness that prevailed, struck a chill into Julia's heart; but she endeavoured to shake it off, that it might not be observed by the penetrating eye of the Countess. She was evidently expected anxiously; for on entering, she was kept waiting only a few moments before she was ushered by Lady de Clifford's tire-woman into the chamber of her mistress.

The room was so darkened, that it was difficult, on first leaving the light of day, to see objects distinctly; but on reaching her bedside, the invalid extended her hand to her visitor, saying, 'It was kind to come so speedily; I dare say my time now is short.'

'I trust not,' said Julia, earnestly; 'I hope you are not so very low.'

'Low, indeed, and beyond human power to help,' she replied.

'But human power is very limited, dear madam, and it is well, because it is so fallible; but power divine knows no limit.'

Lady de Clifford crossed herself, and looked to the farther end of the apartment; and Julia, following the direction, could now see, as she became accustomed to the dim light, that the objects of her regards were a crucifix and an image of the Virgin.

Julia ventured to break the silence by inquiring how her ladyship had passed the night.

'My nights,' she replied, 'are patterns of my days—restless and disturbed. I have outlived the time when anything could charm existence. And yet, my feelings are not entirely dead, for I will confess that you have touched them deeply; if it were not so, I should not have thus desired to

see you. I cannot have long now to live. I could not be in peace without expressing my strong desire to see you turn and embrace once more those holy doctrines which you have been deluded to gainsay and renounce.'

'Dear Lady de Clifford,' said Julia, with emotion, 'I hope you will believe that I am very sensible of the interest you manifest on my behalf. I wish I knew how to show you my sense of your kindness.'

The Countess started partially from her pillow, and gazing in Julia's face, said, in a voice strong enough to prove that her illness was not at the dangerous height she herself imagined, 'Do I understand aright, that your words convey a willingness to renounce the creed of Wycliffe?'

'I believe you have spoken to me the language of your heart,' said Julia, with quiet firmness; 'and I should ill repay you by disguising mine. Were I to act the part of a hypocrite, I should justly deserve your scorn, and until I am taught to see my error, I cannot renounce my belief.'

'You talk reasonably enough,' said the Countess; 'but you deceive yourself. I cannot speak much at present, however, upon so weighty a matter.'

'And yet,' said Julia, 'the subject is too important to be put away in any case, for only one of us can be in the right.'

'See you yonder hallowed shrine?' asked Lady de Clifford.

'I see an image of the Virgin Mary,' answered Julia.

'Will you kneel there,' resumed the Countess, 'and say an Ave-Maria, to propitiate her to enlighten your mind?'

Julia coloured, as she said in a low, but decided voice, 'I cannot do what you desire, because I consider it idolatry. I have asked light, even now, from the only Power that can bestow it, and I believe my prayer will be granted. You will not deny, Lady de Clifford, that I can expect

nothing but obloquy to attach to my profession; and when you reflect on the hazard I must run by continuing to avow my faith in what is called Wycliffe's learning, you will not at least accuse me of insincerity.'

'The Jews were sincere enough when they rejected the Saviour of sinners,' said the Countess.

'Most true,' responded Julia; 'they were given over to a reprobate mind, because they forsook the Fountain of living waters. They wanted temporal aggrandisement; they trusted to vain unauthenticated traditions; the Scriptures they warped or neglected; and when that is the case, no church, no individual, can be in a condition to arrive at the truth.'

'And do you think yourself qualified to investigate the Scriptures with your own unaided judgment?' inquired the lady.

'No, certainly,' she answered; 'but I know that if it was not good for every creature to know the Scriptures, He who dictated them would have given warning on the subject; but, on the contrary, He exhorts to search them. I am very thankful when I can obtain assistance to help my poor weak endeavours to understand the Bible—the oracles of divine truth; but I believe the only effectual teaching and enlightening comes from above, and is denied to none who "ask in faith, nothing wavering."'

'It is a strange fact,' observed Lady de Clifford, 'that you have all the faculty of putting your case in a strong light; I fear this power comes from an evil source. I find myself unable, alas! to proceed in the discussion of this subject at present, it brings with it recollections too much for my strength to bear, and I must defer it to another time.'

With the changeableness that was characteristic of her disease, she now wished she had not entered upon the subject at all. Julia thought of Felix and his convenient op-

portunity; but she did not like to urge the matter further. Some years previous, the Countess would have been offended at the plainness of her visitor's remarks, made as they were in the gentlest accents; but her spirit was much subdued, and the painful subject of discussion had associations that affected her in no common manner.

After having sat by her for some time, Julia plainly saw that Lady de Clifford was not in reality so ill as she believed herself to be, and that she required some one to soothe and arouse her from the hypochondriac state into which she seemed to be falling. She would gladly have been instrumental in so charitable a work; but it was a proposal she could not make. The idea, however, in another form, was passing through the mind of the patient also; for after a long pause, she said, 'One object on which my heart leaned has been doomed to cause me more pain than pleasure; my eyes have been deprived of that whereon they loved to gaze. This has occasioned a blank in life that wants to be filled up. Once, I little imagined it possible to feel as at this moment, when I confess that I look to you as this object: there is but one barrier now to your becoming the adopted child of my affections—the tendril to be entwined around this blighted tree.'

'There are few things in life that could give me more pleasure than to help to lighten your affliction,' said Julia.

'Alas, alas!' was Lady de Clifford's only reply. Her visitor sat beside her until she saw she had rallied a little, and on sending to inquire on the following day, learned that she was better.

When Aymer received accounts of his mother's illness, he hastened home, where he remained for some weeks. There was nothing really of a dangerous character the matter with her, but her spirits were depressed.

She had shut herself up, and her health suffered the

consequences. It was an atmosphere that did not suit Aymer long, and so he returned to London.

But events were at hand to rouse the Countess from her threatened and unnatural torpor. She was well aware of the deep offence taken by the Earl of Warwick. She knew that out of the open rupture, now daily expected, events might arise favourable to her son's restoration to his country; but, in the persuasion that he could no longer benefit by any earthly changes, she now felt little interest in the movements of her restless and ambitious relative.

It was only surprising how false appearances of concord had been so long maintained. The finger of suspicion had often pointed at Warwick, while he continued to be the recipient of important distinctions, and the individual selected to quell rebellion. But feelings of mutual distrust remained. The Earl was in reality a cipher in the councils of the state, and every office of trust conferred upon him, bore the mortifying mark of a desire to keep him at a distance from the court. He had played the part of a looker-on, where he felt that he had the best right to be a leader, as long as his haughty spirit could brook. He had weakened the family influence of the king, by uniting his daughter to the Duke of Clarence, who, dissatisfied with the treatment he met with in the court of his brother, made common cause with his father-in-law. Harassed by commotions, and at a loss whom to trust, Edward could no longer wear the mask he had assumed; and the Earl of Warwick, together with the Duke of Clarence, were accordingly declared traitors, and retired to France.

Lewis the Eleventh wished to see the Lancastrian family restored; and to this practised and crafty politician, a coalition between Margaret of Anjou and her late implacable enemy did not seem at all impossible. Under this impression, he hesitated not to attempt the healing of this radically incurable breach. The queen was invited to the

French court from her castle in Verdun, where she had lived since her exile, in a style quite beneath her dignity; thither also the Earl of Warwick repaired to meet her.

This junction was perhaps one of the most extraordinary on historical record; but it is unnecessary here to enter further into detail on the subject. Queen Margaret and the Earl of Warwick, each suspicious of the other, to serve their respective ends, entered into an agreement that led to renewed war in England.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE current report of an attempt to be made by the Lancastrians for the recovery of the throne, under the auspices of the Earl of Warwick, seemed so improbable, that many disbelieved it. Others, following the leading disposition of the court, made light of the matter; and gallants loudly bragged that they wished for nothing so much, for the sake of the sport of crushing it. King Edward had marched into the country to quell an insurrection, but the occasion was not considered of sufficient importance to make any extensive military preparations, and there was no general call on his adherents.

Sir Henry Pierrepoint was at home; a stormy day having prevented him from leaving the house, he had full leisure for ruminating on these and other subjects, and among them it came to his recollection that this was the sixth anniversary of the royal fête at Clifford Castle.

He had long since given up urging his sister to mingle in society that seemed distasteful; but he had not been able to reconcile himself to the thought of her spending the remainder of her life in the seclusion that was becoming more and more congenial to her. The shadows of an autumn twilight, and the gusts of wind that whistled mournfully through the long passages, did not conspire to raise his spirits; he thought Julia was unusually sad, as

he sat opposite to her, and he was at no loss to guess the cause.

'She might as well be in the cloisters of a nunnery,—only I can look at her here,' he muttered in a half audible voice, as he rose and walked across the room. He leaned on the back of his sister's chair, and began twisting one of her long ringlets about his fingers, scarcely thinking what he did, till she looked up, when he started back, saying, 'No, they would cut these off in a nunnery.'

'So that is the conclusion of a soliloquy, Henry,' she said, with a faint smile.

'Only some nonsense I was thinking of,' he replied, as he seated himself again. 'I am a thoughtless, impatient fellow; I fancy no one but yourself would put up with me.'

'I hope, dear Henry, you are mistaken,' observed his sister. 'I dare say you may one day meet with some one bold enough to make the trial. But why do you accuse yourself so bitterly this evening?'

'I am out of sorts,' he answered. 'I think I have done wrong in tarrying at home, for every day brings tidings of fresh tumult; and although I do not at all fear the result of such insane proceedings on the part of the discontented, I cannot longer forbear offering my services to the king; and then, Julia, you must be left here alone.'

'Your kind concern about me is no great proof of the thoughtlessness you spoke of, my dear brother,' she observed.

'Indeed, Julia,' he resumed, 'I do not know when my mind was so burdened; and I believe I must tell you of another subject that is much in my thoughts. I wish there was any possible way of learning something of poor De Clifford.'

Julia was greatly affected at the tender solicitude on her account thus indicated. As soon as she could command

herself so as to articulate distinctly, she said, 'Dear Henry, I appreciate your kindness deeply; but it is my belief that all inquiry would be in vain; and I trust it has been my endeavour to bow submissively, assured that the lot appointed for him and for me is right and good.'

'The composure I see you maintain under real trials,' observed her brother, 'is a striking contrast to the fretfulness exhibited by myself and others under petty annoyances.'

The colour mantled on Julia's cheek, as she said, 'Those who deal honestly with themselves know the plague of their own hearts. Had I not possessed one which clung too tenaciously to earth, I had not required so many hard lessons. If I have been enabled to attain to some composure of spirit, the merit is not mine; many a struggle has been made by self-will, and a sinful heart.'

'I wonder to hear you talk so much of a sinful heart,' said Henry. 'I do not think there is half as much evil in you as in many that pass for mighty good Christians. I am willing to give you a better character than you give yourself.'

'Because you do not know me as well,' she rejoined. 'I have long since been taught the reason, brought to own the justice, of the trial wherewith I have been visited; my judgment has acknowledged it to be right, but my rebellious will has often refused to bend beneath the chastening stroke; and thus, Henry, I have learned that deep corruption dwells within, a lesson I should not have been likely to gain in a course such as I might have chosen for myself, had I been permitted. If the felicity of this world had been good for me, I am sure it would not be denied.'

'I could understand,' he remarked with unwonted gravity, 'how persons may be soothed in their troubles, by the kindness and sympathy of friends, even into forgetfulness of their sorrows; but yours are of a nature to

shrink from common observation, and cannot receive such an alleviation ; and as for me, I know I often torment you by my inconsiderate ways.'

'You have drawn the picture of a very pelican in the wilderness, my dear brother,' she said ; 'and yet I own the portraiture is true enough. I am fully persuaded that the peculiar trial fitted to each Christian individually, is measured out with unerring precision, and suited with an exactness that belongs to infinite wisdom alone. I believe the most difficult to bear are those that shun the knowledge of those with whom we associate—that harrow the feelings, and yet seek to be hidden. But they have their advantage ; they drive the sufferer from perishing comforts to the Friend of sinners. From Him we desire to hide nothing ; and the distressed, who have the privilege of pouring their complaints into his willing ear, well know the sweetness and the benefit of such a confidence, and must at length be brought to acknowledge that no way can be too thorny, if it leads to the fountain of living waters.'

Henry did not very well understand his sister's remarks ; but he felt assured, whatever others might think of it, that her devotion was of a high and blissful character. He said nothing ; and she, recurring to his former observations, added, 'I did hope the last blood to be shed in this unhappy quarrel was already spilt, and I still hope the peace of the kingdom will not suffer any serious interruption at this time.'

'I have my doubts as to that,' he replied ; 'and I must not linger at my own fireside. How fearfully the tempest rages, Julia ! and yet I imagined I heard a door opened to receive some person a short time ago ; nothing but necessity or urgent business could induce a human being to travel on such a night. Perhaps some news of importance may have been sent ; I wonder that did not occur to me at the instant.'

He rose hastily, and was about to leave the room, when a servant opened the door, and announced that an old man, a minstrel, had arrived seeking shelter from the storm, and would be glad, if agreeable, to entertain them with music.

'By all means,' said Sir Henry, 'after he has rested and refreshed himself. I am right glad of a little diversion,' he added after the servant had gone, 'for my spirits have been wretchedly low. You love music, Julia, and will not deny the lady's smile to the minstrel.'

Music was little in unison with her feelings, but it gratified her to see Henry amused, and she offered no objection.

In a very short time the man returned, to say that the harper declined partaking of anything, and begged to have the honour of commencing his performance.

'Let him come in at once, then,' said Pierrepont; 'we shall live romance for an hour, Julia. This uncertain light is quite in keeping.'

The stranger was now introduced; he had a tall, commanding figure, but his countenance could not be discerned clearly by the partial gleam from the fire.

'I understand that you have fared sparingly, or rather have fasted since you came to my house, friend,' said Henry, addressing him; 'how is this? The weather, the hour, and your occupation demand somewhat, I think.'

'I do not need refreshment,' he replied. 'But, sir, I thank you.'

He placed his harp in a right position, and passed his fingers rapidly over the strings; his slight symphony showed that he was complete master of the instrument, and Julia's attention was engaged. He played a short, mournful air, full of pathos; at its conclusion Henry said—

'That was a pretty plaintive thing; but I should like a song.'

'My voice is scarce in such good tune as my harp,' ob-

served the minstrel, in a very subdued tone; 'but I shall try it at your bidding.'

'Do, then; let me press you first to partake of a little wine,' said the host.

'Pardon me, sir knight; at present I must decline your kindness,' replied the stranger.

'Why, your abstinence is more suited to some holy pilgrim from the shrine of our Lady of Loretto, than a jovial harper,' observed Henry.

'I have been at Loretto,' said the stranger.

'Ah! and you saw that wonderful house after its miraculous journey. Tell us about it,' cried Pierrepont, crossing himself.

'My object, sir, was not a pilgrimage such as you allude to,' said the minstrel. 'I have no sanctity to boast by reason of my wanderings; but instead of the information you desire, I shall, if you please, sing one of the songs I learned from the troubadours.'

'Do so, then,' said his host; and the harper, in compliance with Sir Henry's express desire, now sounded out a spirited air, and accompanied it with his voice. The words were in a language they did not understand, but which was quite familiar to the performer. The poetry, in fact, was Dante's, but into the nature of it Henry inquired not, while he gave his unhesitating approbation to the performance; and the minstrel, as if wishing to avoid being again asked to use his voice, followed up the song with an air, which, demanding a nice and discerning management of touch, displayed to advantage his skill and taste. Meantime Julia was strangely affected by the harper, and the tone of his voice fell on her ear with a peculiarity for which she could not account. She had not spoken a word hitherto; but as the sound once more died away, and the music ceased, she turned to where the stranger sat, saying, 'Have you long lived abroad?'

The minstrel almost started, but instantly recovering his composure, he answered, 'I have, lady, been long a stranger in England.'

'You have not forgotten English music, however,' interrupted Sir Henry; 'you can surely treat us to an English ditty. You have not so imbibed foreign manners as to disparage your country, I hope. I should cry shame on the Englishman that could mark England second to any other in the world.'

'My country!' said the minstrel. 'I hope you may never experience the heart-yearning after England that can only be felt by an exile.'

Julia looked round again, and Henry at the same time rousing the fire, a brilliant light was cast upon the harper's face. His words had been addressed to Henry, but his regards were fixed on Julia. Immediately, however, on catching her eye, his were turned again upon the instrument.

Once again the minstrel touched his harp, but it was now to draw forth sounds that broke the spell by which Julia appeared to be bound. The notes that reached her were notes she had oftentimes heard before, but she thought the air was unknown except in a very limited circle; it was, in fact, one composed by the Earl de Clifford. She could scarcely repress her emotion while the music lasted; she started from her seat, and going up close to the harper, said, 'Tell me, where, how, you procured that last music?'

Her brother, on whom the air had made a much more feeble impression, was astonished, and even alarmed at her vehemence; but before he could make a remark, he was himself arrested by a mysterious feeling as the blaze again shone bright upon the stranger's face, who put aside the harp, saying in a voice different from that he had assumed in speaking before, 'My talisman has succeeded.' He rose from his seat, and undoing a clasp at his throat,

the mantle that hung in ample folds about his person fell to the ground, and displayed, not the form of age and decay, but a figure of manly grace and vigour, dressed in the style of a gentleman of rank, but wanting in its particulars those extravagant and tasteless ornaments which encumbered the dress of the times.¹ The silvery locks which hung about his face, in a luxuriance rather unnatural, were by no means in keeping with his metamorphosed figure, and were evidently used for disguise; but it was a disguise soon penetrated. 'I am so altered then!' he ejaculated.

Julia stood as if transfixed before him; the scene was too much for her, and she could only pronounce 'Howard!' when she would have fallen to the ground had not the ready arm of De Clifford supported her.

Henry in the alarm of the moment would have summoned every servant in the house, but De Clifford, with more presence of mind, prevented him. 'As you love your sister,' he said, 'call not another to gaze on her at this moment. Do but fetch a little water.'

On opening her eyes Julia was startled; and making an effort to exert herself, she faintly said, glancing at the figure before her—

'It cannot be reality.'

Seeing her doubtful expression, the Earl quickly divested himself of the remainder of his disguise.

'You are observing these reverent tokens,' he said, as he put aside the borrowed hair. 'You will own me now, I hope. The years of hardship through which I have passed since we parted cannot surely have put me beyond the possibility of recognition here—dear, dear Julia, let me hear you name me again.'

'De Clifford,' said Henry, grasping his hand, 'I cannot express the pleasure I feel. I was juggled to purpose,

¹ Note M.

but never so agreeably before. I do heartily welcome you.'

'Do you?' asked the Earl. 'Then I find you the same warm friend I left you; but I do not expect you will ratify your welcome to the tidings I bring.'

'I guess them,' cried Pierrepont; 'the Earl of Warwick—is it not so? yet, nevertheless, I repeat my welcome to an old friend. Perhaps we are attached to opposite interests; but what of that?—party feeling shall not divide our affections.'

'My noble friend,' responded De Clifford, clapping his hand on Henry's shoulder, 'I give you joy of retaining the warmth of your heart amid the ice of these disastrous times, when self-interest or party feeling seems to be every man's leading principle. My past history sufficiently marks the side I espouse, and you are, I know, a Yorkist.'

'How did you come by this information?' inquired Pierrepont.

'No matter,' replied the Earl; 'explanation will come time enough; and Julia has not uttered another word.'

He gazed on her features as on a picture, where we strive to trace every trait of resemblance to a loved object that was once familiar. The few sentences that had passed between her brother and the Earl had given her time to collect her thoughts, and resume in some degree her self-command. The joyous welcome that welled up from the heart was partially chilled, as the thought arose, how could he have left his protracted absence unbroken by a single intimation of his existence? could it be accounted for in any satisfactory manner? But one little hour before, she would have deemed the intelligence of his being alive the happiest she could receive on earth; yet in the complicated workings of the human heart there was no inconsistency, now that he

in reality stood before her, in this very fact suggesting a transitory suspicion of forgetfulness that called for explanation; and an expression of perplexity came over her features that the Earl was not slow to interpret.

'And is it so,' he said, 'that Julia has not one word of welcome for the exile?'

'You cannot be surprised that I should be bewildered,' was her reply, 'when you stand thus so suddenly before me, whom I had never thought to see again.'

'I understand,' he responded; 'appearances favour the idea that it was scarcely possible but the living might find means of communicating information to those they loved. Is it not so?'

'And if it should be so,' said Henry, interposing, 'you cannot think it matter of surprise, nor suppose that we have become distrustful.'

'No, Pierrepont; your reception, before these cautions had time to intrude themselves, has convinced me that I did not miscalculate, when I took the resolution that led to my present appearance; and the confidence with which I have thus thrown myself upon you must satisfy you that I expected to find here that truth and sincerity I was wont to experience. Something of my present position you have already guessed, and I am going to confide to your honour further particulars. I must not, however, allow my private feelings to make me forget that I speak to a pledged adherent of the house of York. Not that I believe there is any danger to be apprehended to our cause in any case, and of my personal safety I can entertain no doubt beneath your roof. King Henry is already proclaimed. You stand in mute astonishment.'

'Mute!' repeated Pierrepont; 'true, but not long.' He made one or two hasty strides, while he muttered, 'I have been too long here; my saddle is a more fitting place for me than this.'

'Listen to me,' said De Clifford, following him. 'Your zeal is in vain; Edward of York is now on the salt waters, flying to the protection of his brother-in-law of Burgundy, and the Earl of Warwick is in the fair way of becoming master of England.'

'I cannot doubt your word,' said the astonished Henry; 'but are you sane?'

'I trust I am,' answered De Clifford. 'This is just another of those marvellous events that have come in our day, too thick to be any longer wondered at. Could I have slept another night on English ground without coming here, I should not have been the bearer of these tidings. The friends I left are in no danger; I may be exposed to some before I rejoin them; but the object I had in view was worthy the risk. Some disguise was indispensable; I assumed that which I thought the most likely to gain me admittance to your presence, Julia, as I could alone come. I had no small difficulty in repressing my feelings, while I played the minstrel's part; forgive me, if I was anxious to ascertain for myself if I was here remembered as I wished.'

In the moment of surprise, Julia had betrayed the real feelings of her heart; but she still found it difficult to give utterance to her struggling thoughts.

'You have taken us by surprise,' she said; 'not many hours since, it was my conviction that you were not in existence; and you must be aware that we had good reason to entertain this belief.'

'Yes, I own it,' he responded; 'and no words can convey any idea of the distress I endured from being unable to send you a single assurance of my unalterable affection through years of lengthened absence. You are aware it was needful for me to conceal my name and rank; how I lived, and where I wandered, there is no time now to rehearse; but I felt that I was virtually a proscribed man,

cut off from home and kindred, and that which was dearer still. I found a temporary home among a poor persecuted Christian people; but oftentimes I tasted the bitterness of hope deferred. No opportunity seemed likely to offer of conveying even one message to you. Much I had to endure on this account; but the most painful thing that occurred throughout the time was, that I missed the only means that ever offered of communicating my thoughts with freedom and safety. I was absent in the neighbourhood of Verdun, and on my return, I found that Risby had departed for England. It was an unutterable mortification; but after a time I was made to bear it by the consideration that it might be for your good to remain in ignorance of one who had no cheering news to convey, no present prospect of returning—who could only tell of wanderings in deep valleys and on high Alps, in much tribulation and frequent danger, while my life was never likely to be of the smallest comfort to you. I almost wished in moments of despondency, for your sake, that we had never met; and my only consolation was, that you were under the guardianship of an unerring and loving Friend, whose power is unlimited, and who would deny nothing that was really for your good.'

Julia withdrew the hand that had been shading her pale countenance, as she said, 'Risby?—did you say Risby?'

'I did, Julia; what know you of Risby?'

'I have heard him preach. I—oh! I cannot enter upon that just now.'

'It needs not,' observed De Clifford; 'for I have heard of your trial, your constancy under it, and your deliverance from the snare of persecutors,' and his eyes flashed as the idea rose to his mind. 'I have seen a faithful, though humble friend, who told me much in which I had both joy and sorrow.'

'A friend?' repeated Henry inquiringly.

'Yes, Pierrepont; and who I cannot forget was befriended essentially by you,—my page Blondel. After a period of fruitless search, he met me in his wanderings; but I must not, cannot be prolix. I am conscious of placing you in an unpleasant position, Henry, but the peculiarity of my own circumstances must be my apology; you cannot but understand me.'

'Sufficiently well,' replied Pierrepont; 'but the subject to which you allude is not for present discussion. England, it seems, wants men and arms; and I sit not coolly here to calculate probabilities, while your party are up and doing.'

'I make every allowance for you,' said the Earl; 'but I cannot forget, that at the first recognition, you received me with a brother's cordiality, saying that party distinctions should not divide our affections.'

'I do not retract my words,' rejoined Henry, with evident marks of agitation; 'but there are certain points on which I am not very cool. You talked, my lord, of the Earl of Warwick. Does he mean to assume the crown, in his condescending anxiety for the welfare of the people of England?'

'No,' answered De Clifford; 'but he has heartily returned to his allegiance, or you should not find me in his company. To be brief, I am pledged to the support of Prince Edward of Lancaster, on behalf of his own and his father's claims. The prince is worthy the loyalty of his nation, and gives bright promise of every excellence that can adorn a crown. Through his means, I hope to see many long-absent blessings shed upon England. Further particulars I cannot now disclose.'

'It is impossible England should tamely brook the change you speak of,' said Pierrepont.

'My friend,' replied the Earl, 'the people of England

greet the change with satisfaction; and well they may, for the prince, whose cause I espouse, is a noble youth. In a day or two the tidings I have disclosed to you will be all over England. I do not exult in the downfall of your party; for I know too well what it is to belong to the adverse side. But unlike the late government, the Prince of Wales will gladly allow every man to live, and enjoy his fortune and his opinions as he lists, provided he raises not rebellion. I was a fugitive under the Yorkists' sway; you, Henry, may remain unmolested under the Lancastrians'.

'I never heard of an expectant that made not fine promises,' cried Henry. 'We shall see what the end of all this boasting is to be.'

Footsteps were heard on the staircase, and the Earl instantly resumed his disguise. He had scarcely done so before a servant appeared, to say that a messenger had arrived who wished to see Sir Henry on urgent business. On his quitting the room to attend the summons, De Clifford observed, 'I have little doubt this person is come to warn Henry of the Earl of Warwick's landing; but do not alarm yourself, dearest Julia, for I trust his services shall not be required.'

'Oh! Howard,' she cried, 'after all that I have seen, and heard, and felt, do you wonder I should be at a loss to express my thoughts?'

'I do not,' he said; 'but our interview, Julia, must be brief. You see that there is every reason to prevent my remaining here even for many minutes longer; before I leave you, then, let me offer the pledge of broken gold we divided at parting.' He drew it from his breast, and placed it in her hand. 'This,' he continued, 'I preserved through many an hour of adverse worldly fortune, often when it was the only gold I possessed. I wish it to convey to you the belief, that the affection it imaged forth then

has remained, like the gold, in its integrity. Say, am I to receive yours in exchange, with the like assurance?’

Julia took her portion of the coin from its resting-place, and holding it out to De Clifford, said, half reproachfully, ‘Could you doubt it? In my confusion, I believe I spoke no word of welcome, but this shall now be my interpreter.’

‘The welcome your emotion testified,’ he said, ‘words could not have uttered. And now, my loved Julia, I grieve to think you are still to be left in perplexity; but I hope the time is not distant, when I shall have it in my power to strew some flowers in your path; alas that I should ever have planted it with thorns! But changeless is the source of your purest joy; and in this I may, in every event, rejoice.’

He now produced a pretty large packet. ‘When I sat preparing this,’ he resumed, ‘in a wild and almost desolate corner of the Cottian Alps, I little expected to be the bearer of my own despatches. Here, Julia, you will find a narrative of my wanderings during nearly six dreary years. I did not know how they should find their way to you, but I trusted they might, as the vindication of my silence, and the proof of my fond love. They formed the solace of many an hour, and were some alleviation of the painful impossibility of holding any immediate communication. Often, when I drew out my writing materials, and sat down in my solitude to record the events and feelings of the day, I pictured to myself your sweet retirement, with all its well-remembered accompaniments; I fancied it possible, too, that Julia’s thoughts were resting on the exile. I have, in short, ruminated with the pen in my hand, until the landscape from your window seemed spread out before me, and a cascade, that fell over a rock close beside my dwelling, was, in imagination, softened down to the quiet ripple of the crystal waters that dance on the surface of the little pond here. The thoughts that succeeded were

sad enough, in the mistrustful sinfulness of my heart. This packet, then, was the legacy I designed for you should I never return to England; here you shall find proof how my thoughts rested with you in absence and distance, and its perusal will render you mistress of my history till within a short time before I quitted the Continent. During that period, you can easily understand how my engagements forbade such a record.'

Julia's tears fell fast and silently, and De Clifford continued: 'Our expedition has not hitherto met with any obstruction, and I believe we shall only have to take peaceable possession of London; but it would be in vain to expect Henry to give credit to such a statement. He will, of course, make an effort to aid his party; but you need not be under the least anxiety on his account, he shall return to you, I trust, unscathed. I, too, hope to return very shortly, in another guise than this,—one more fitting the suit I may then venture to present.'

'Howard,' she said earnestly, 'the success or failure of the cause to which you have attached yourself, and the position in which you may consequently be placed, can never influence me in the smallest degree.'

The sound of voices, above all of which Henry's predominated, loudly issuing orders, interrupted their conversation. The Earl dared not linger, and Julia grew pale with terror. 'I must leave my harp in your keeping,' he said. 'I managed, not without difficulty, to have it conveyed here. It is not a very suitable appendage in such an emergency, but it has done me good service. Blondel awaits me with horses at an appointed place, and I mean to cross the country so as to join the Earl of Warwick before he reaches London.'

'Oh!' she exclaimed, 'this is a pain I never until now fully realized—my brother and you going forth in hostility to join opposite sides in a battle-field!'

'My beloved Julia,' he said earnestly, 'I beseech you, dry these tears, and keep up your courage, for I do assure you that he who was lately king of England is now at sea, and has no banners to fight under. I heard the shout of "Long live King Henry" resound within his camp, a sufficient indication of public feeling. The Lancastrians will take quiet possession of the kingdom; and it is strange if I have not sufficient interest to procure an indemnity for Pierrepont Manor.'

Just at that moment Henry entered the room; he was flushed and excited. 'A messenger has confirmed your intelligence, De Clifford,' he said, 'and my duty is clear in the matter; I shall stand to my colours to the last.'

'That resolution I neither can nor will gainsay,' replied the Earl; 'but from my knowledge of the true state of matters, I am sure it would be better for you to remain passive. I must, however, to my post, for I perceive the news spreads rapidly. Will you give me egress by a private door, as I would avoid the notice of your domestics?'

'Yes, and my personal escort beyond my premises,' answered Pierrepont. 'You shall meet with no molestation here; but once we have parted there can be nothing between us but a "fair field and no favour."'

De Clifford took a hurried farewell of Julia, and tried to whisper some words of comfort, but they could not calm her anxious forebodings.

On parting with Henry, the Earl said, 'We have scarcely entered the lists yet, and I offer you the hand of that most sincere friendship I have ever felt towards you.'

Pierrepont accepted it as he replied, 'Well, I wish our interview was under happier stars, and I hope we may not meet again, except we can do so as in former years.'

Henry's absence was very short, and when he returned to the house he found his sister in the same spot where he

had left her. 'Julia,' he observed, 'these are strange events.'

'Strange indeed,' she strove to reply.

'Your feelings have been taxed overmuch, my poor sister,' he said; 'you had better retire to your room, for I must to business. I shall not leave home, however, for a few hours; it must be very early in the morning; but be satisfied that I shall not go without seeing you again, and now good-night, and keep up your spirits.'

When Julia was left alone, her first care was to secure the harp. In the confusion that prevailed the minstrel had not been thought of, but very soon the servants began to ask each other what had become of him. Not one of them had seen him depart, and shrewd suspicions of mystery arose; but they were all undefined, and soon dismissed in the din of such preparations as they had never witnessed at the Manor before.

Shutting herself up, Julia undid the fastening of her packet, but she found it so voluminous that its thorough perusal must be partially delayed. She turned over the leaves from end to end, ran over their contents, and then folding them up, laid them carefully by in her most secure repository.

She counted every hour, and fearing that her brother might go away, through mistaken tenderness, without her knowledge, she could not wait his promised appearance. The daylight had not yet dawned; but sure that she heard indications of his departure, she took a lamp in her hand and descended to the hall. She found him fully accoutred, and wearing in his cap a white rosette. He hastened to meet her, saying, 'Why did you disturb yourself, Julia? do you think I would have gone without a parting word?'

'I fear you have been up all night, Henry,' she said.

'What of that?' he answered gaily; 'few have won gilded spurs without holding vigil, and mine are yet to

earn. Do not look so sad, sister mine, I am in my right place. This badge,' pointing to his cap, 'I pledge my honour to support. But farewell, I hear the tramp of my horses.' He stooped to imprint a kiss on her cheek, as he added, 'You are yourself more like the white rose than the red.' A servant announced that all was ready; Sir Henry mounted his well-trained charger, put himself at the head of his retainers, and set out on his first warlike expedition.

It was no wonder that King Edward's sudden flight from his kingdom should appear as incredible as Henry Pierrepont had at first thought it. Edward, in despite of every warning, continued to act as if by infatuation. He had received tidings of the extraordinary convention entered into between Margaret of Anjou and the Earl of Warwick, but he believed his own popularity proof against all attack; and he had so accustomed himself to a life of luxurious ease, that he was still unwilling to be roused from his indolent security. He had taken, however, one precautionary measure. He despatched a gentlewoman to France, under pretence of joining the Duchess of Clarence, but with a private commission to induce the Duke to desert the side espoused by his father-in-law. She represented to him that he was working the overthrow of the house of York, and that since the marriage of the Prince with Lady Anne Neville, the insertion of his name in the succession to the crown of England was a mere farce. This negotiator executed her errand so well, that the irresolute Duke was shaken, and a future period proved that his brother's stratagem had been successful.


When King Edward received intelligence of the landing of his ancient ally, he was near Lynne with his troops, and had in his company the Earl of Warwick's brother, the Marquis of Montague, whose attachment to his person he did not question. No sooner, however, was the Earl

fairly in England, than he was joined by his brother, and Edward was first made sensible of his personal danger by the shout of 'Long live King Henry' being raised among his own followers.

A few days after the Earl of Warwick landed, the head of the house of York was constrained to embark in haste, as he stood, without a penny to defray his expenses, on board a trading vessel which lay at Lynne; and with some hundred followers, all as badly appointed as himself, he landed in Holland, having narrowly escaped capture at sea. King Henry, on the other hand, was taken from the Tower, where he had long been imprisoned, and found himself proclaimed king. Edward had no present resource but the protection of the Duke of Burgundy, who at heart bore him no affection, and but for the alliance that was between them, would much prefer to see the opposing party victorious; in fact, he then supported at his court some of the exiles who had been obliged at Henry's overthrow to quit England.

This revolution was accomplished in the course of eleven days, and without any resistance, for the army assembled to maintain the authority of King Edward, quietly enlisted themselves on the other side. The known adherents of Edward of York sought shelter in the religious houses, or fled from the storm wherever they could; and the new government was settled almost without opposition, while Queen Elizabeth, with her children, retired to the gloomy sanctuary of Westminster, where they suffered many privations, and where the unhappy, short-lived Edward the Fifth was born.

CHAPTER XX.

S Sir Henry Pierrepont advanced on his way towards London, he found the country in general commotion; but the prevailing conviction seemed to be the eventual triumph of the renowned and popular Warwick. Nothing daunted by these adverse symptoms, he rode boldly forward, determined to see for himself the fate of matters at the metropolis. As he came within a few miles of it, the badge of the ragged staff¹ evidently predominated, intermingled with the red rose, or the Prince of Wales's feather. Sir Henry drew his men into a close compact form, and keeping a short distance in their van, he went briskly on till he found himself suddenly challenged by a horseman, and commanded to stand still. His first impulse was resistance, and he lifted his sword. Half a dozen gleamed before his eyes in an instant, but no one attempted to strike him. His little party was entirely surrounded. There were thickets by the road side, and Pierrepont now understood that he was taken unawares by a band that had lain in ambush.

‘By what authority do you intercept me on the highway?’ he demanded in an angry tone.

‘That is soon told,’ replied he who seemed in command. ‘The Earl of Warwick has possession of London on behalf

¹ Note N.

of our liege lord King Henry, and we suffer no Yorkist badge-wearers, in hostile array, to pass in thither.'

'The point is capable of being contested, however,' said Sir Henry; 'and my merry men yonder would like to try their skill.'

'We have numbers sufficient to master the most gallant band that lives, of double your complement,' was the rejoinder. 'Our commands, however, are to save life when we can. We are all Englishmen, and need not kill each other for pure amusement. Our cause is won without the sacrifice of a man as yet; and, with your leave, gentle sir, we shall not begin with you.'

'Why, you talk as if I could not defend myself,' said Henry, haughtily; but the spokesman of the adverse party seized a firm hold of his bridle. He attempted to shake off the intruder, but was speedily made sensible that it was in vain; he received no personal injury, but in the struggle his white favour was torn from his helmet and trampled in the dust. The wearer was too much excited to perceive his loss, and shouted loudly to his followers to fight for their freedom; but it was of no use, he saw them marched away in the midst of a party that far outnumbered them, and was obliged to submit to be escorted into London by four men, as a prisoner. This novel mode of entrance was by no means to his taste, and was an event he had never anticipated. It was in a very moody humour he proceeded; vexation sealed his lips, till fairly in the streets, when he inquired in an angry tone, 'What they meant to enact next?'

'You shall be honourably lodged, as beseems our master's dignity, and your own,' was the reply.

They halted opposite to a large mansion, and leading Sir Henry's horse under an arched gateway, one of them knocked at a house door, which was immediately opened, and after one or two words of parley, he was respectfully

but firmly requested to alight. After being conducted up two or three pair of stairs, he was shown into a very comfortable apartment, where there was nothing to complain of, save that he was detained against his will, and this, to him, would have been no trivial grievance in any case. The officer who had first accosted him was still his conductor; and now, as he was about to leave him, he said, 'I hope, sir, you will suffer no inconvenience. I have executed my commands, and am only commissioned further to say, that your safety was consulted by placing you here.' He retired without waiting for a reply; and Pierrepoint was disagreeably made aware that the door was barred against his egress. He walked to a window, but it only looked into a court-yard, and was at a great height from the ground. He undid his helmet, and in putting it down, he observed, for the first time, that he had lost his white favour. 'A bad omen,' he muttered as he threw himself on a chair; and, casting his eyes over the apartment, he thought it was a new mode of serving a man, to shut him up, where he could not get out at pleasure. The room, to be sure, was in every respect well fitted up; but its position was such as to render his escape impossible, and this was enough to make it odious.

About an hour had been passed in much impatience, and in cogitations of no pleasant nature, when some one was heard approaching. The door of Sir Henry's room was opened, and the Earl de Clifford stood before him. His first sensation was of pleasure; but the next impulse clouded his brow, as he drew back some paces from his friend, and replied to his frank greeting by saying, 'I should like to understand the footing on which we meet here.'

'On no other, I trust, shall we ever meet, but that of the most entire friendship,' was De Clifford's reply.

'It may be friendship that dictated the transaction of this morning,' said Henry, somewhat haughtily, 'but it

wears a strange complexion; and if you are the author of this brave device, my lord, permit me to say I brook it very indifferently.'

'Henry,' said the Earl, 'I was the means of your capture; but it was to save you from far heavier calamity. I fully expected you to come to London in the fashion you did, and I had you watched. The party whose cause you would espouse, are so completely confounded by the suddenness of the blow, that all semblance of resistance is at an end. I rejoice that this victory has been a bloodless one. Such is the position of the Yorkists, that the sanctuaries in and near London are crowded with their adherents. Edward's queen has retired to Westminster Abbey, and to-morrow King Henry is to be proclaimed.'

'I do not admire this way of terminating my campaign,' observed his astonished and restless listener, who was sorely unwilling to credit what he would fain believe to be false. 'I want to show, and I don't care who knows it, that I am ready to maintain the York cause against all opponents.'

'That might be all very well and proper in its right place,' said the Earl; 'but unless you reserve your prowess for a passage of arms, where you may enter the lists with any colour that suits your fancy, your courage must be suffered to evaporate innocuous. But seriously, had you succeeded in entering London as you designed, your men would have been but as a handful in the grasp of your enemies; and very likely, before this time of day, you should yourself have been in a much colder lodging than you will find this temporary abode of mine to be.'

'And is there no one,' cried Henry, indignantly, 'not a man of England's chivalry, to stand out in defence of our beautiful queen, to lighten her sorrow by their ready aid—not a knight or noble, who lately basked in the sunshine of her smiles?'

‘I beseech you, Henry, to be calm, and to talk less loudly, or all my caution will be in vain,’ said his friend. ‘The queen is in no danger. I told you that she has taken sanctuary in Westminster, and I have reason to know that she will be suffered to pass from thence in perfect safety to her paternal home, where, I dare say, she had more real happiness than she has ever experienced since she gave herself up to the false glitter of ambition. But she is in trouble, and I do not wish to accuse her harshly.’

‘It is as well judged,’ observed Pierrepoint, rather sullenly. ‘But I wish, with all your wisdom, you had left me to manage my own affairs.’

‘Henry,’ said De Clifford in a determined manner, ‘are you in your senses, or are you tired of your life, that you talk so extravagantly? Had I no interest in you, it were easy to let you have very unpleasant proofs of the hopelessness of your cause; but I must remind you that I have it in my power to control your movements for the present, and trust me, you do not depart from safe keeping without giving pledge of your peaceable conduct.’ At that moment a confused noise was heard, becoming more and more loud as it evidently approached nearer. ‘Hark!’ resumed the Earl; ‘this apartment is rather distant from the street, but with an open window you may now hear a corroboration of my statements.’ By this time the voices of a multitude became distinctly audible, and the air was rent by cries of ‘Long live King Henry! A speedy voyage to the Prince of Wales! Three cheers for the noble Earl of Warwick! Flourish the ragged staff!’

These sounds, and the information they conveyed of the state of popular feeling, somewhat subdued the choler of Sir Henry Pierrepoint. He was angry, but he could not help seeing that he had escaped imminent danger. ‘The vile catiffs!’ he exclaimed; ‘fickle as the wind, and treacherous as the sea.’ He turned from the window, and

his eye rested on his helmet. De Clifford's followed the same direction.

'I took care you should not enter London adorned with the white rose,' he said. 'It was my injunction you should be deprived of that badge, and my men have managed their business excellently well. Depend upon it, Henry, the loss of it saved you from insult in the street; and as you came hither, no one, save your escort, had the least idea that you came as a prisoner. Now, I know you are in wretched humour with me, but you shall not find me a hard jailer,—you shall be at liberty to depart as soon as the twilight closes; only, I must have your word, that when I restore you to your own band, who are now, as well as yourself, in safe custody, you will lead them back to their homes in peace. I shall myself accompany you till you join them, and I wish I could be in your train to the Manor, but that cannot be at present.'

By this time, Sir Henry had become tolerably calm; his suspicions of De Clifford's conduct were hushed, and he resumed something of his wonted manner, as he said—

'Well, the fate of war and fortune have caused us to shift positions for a time, so I must submit.'

'If you had appeared among us in the hostile manner you intended, nothing could have saved you from being a peculiarly marked man,' observed the Earl; 'but, I trust, I shall have no difficulty in managing matters satisfactorily. And now, perhaps, you will tell me how you left Julia.'

'Well,' was the laconic reply.

'She will, at least, own that I did her a service, by being careful of her brother,' said the Earl, 'though his own feelings are too much touched at present to own it as such.'

'Her brother, however, is not quite so unreasonable,' responded Henry, a little awkwardly, 'as not to own that he is satisfied your intentions were good; but,' he added,

as if to make amends to himself for this candid confession of a service which, in its manner of application, was offensive to his pride,—‘but it is not easy to reconcile a man to being kidnapped on the highway like a robber.’

The nature of the feeling De Clifford perfectly understood, and he only said, ‘I would have been here sooner, but my engagements precluded it. I have come at last, not without difficulty, and I regret that I must now again leave you. I hope you are satisfied that it is best for you to be as you are till my return, which shall be as early as I judge it safe for you to leave town. You gave me personal escort through your dominions some nights ago; I intend to return you the compliment, by seeing you beyond London to-night.’

When Pierrepont was left alone, and had given himself to the unusual and very troublesome exercise of thinking, he was satisfied that his friend’s stratagem had been suggested by the best and purest motives; and when they again met, it was with more cordiality on his part. But a certain degree of irritability still lingered on his mind, which led him to observe, as they quitted the house together, ‘Your entertainment, my lord, has been rather after an awkward fashion, I must take leave to remark.’

‘It was the best I could offer in the circumstances, believe me,’ said the Earl.

They went on without interruption, till they arrived in the close vicinity of the place where the morning’s adventure had occurred, when De Clifford halted. ‘Your men are now near at hand,’ he said, ‘and I shall bid you farewell. Before a fortnight elapses I hope to be with you at the Manor; meantime, may I ask you to be the bearer of this letter?’

It was received in silence; the Earl gave a signal, and in a few moments a small party made their appearance, who having received instructions, started off again directly.

In a few moments more Sir Henry's followers were on the centre of the highway, and their conductors departed to a little distance.

'I have nothing further to do with these,' said De Clifford, pointing to the Yorkists. 'I accept your pledge, Sir Henry, that they be disposed of as agreed, and I am content to be answerable for its fulfilment.'

'You have my pledge,' answered Pierrepoint, taking his friend's extended hand, and they parted,—Sir Henry, to return in no agreeable mood to Pierrepoint Manor, mortified at the result of his first military undertaking; and the Earl to the busy scenes transacting in London, where he was constrained to remain until a new government should be formed.

Pierrepoint was now quite convinced that there was, in reality, nothing which an individual like himself could reasonably hope to do in aid of his friends and their common cause, but he was mortified and depressed. There was no need to explain matters minutely to his followers, for they had seen enough to make them glad to return to their humble dwellings without further molestation.

CHAPTER XXI.



FEW hours had most unexpectedly, and most completely, altered the position of Julia Pierrepont. Hoping against hope, she had cherished the idea—rather the wish—that De Clifford should yet return, and unfold the mystery that he alone could unravel; but improbability had nearly grown into the conviction of impossibility. Now she had seen him—heard him; the history she had so often sighed to know lay before her, and yet she must continue to undergo the sifting process; the form of trial was changed into acute, pressing anxiety respecting the immediate safety of those dearest to her on earth, and she almost wished to shut her eyes on future probabilities.

She spent the day in the perusal of her manuscript. It contained a narrative of De Clifford's life from the time of his quitting England, interspersed with many observations, and much information, well calculated to stablish, strengthen, and settle, in the grounds of a simple, sublime, scriptural faith. Into these, however, we shall not enter, while giving a sketch of the wanderer's continental life.

When De Clifford set foot on the French coast, he could not but feel his situation more novel than agreeable. He had carried with him sufficient funds to last some time in the manner of life he intended to adopt; and his simple habits enabled him to conform to his assumed station

without much annoyance. At that period the French language was still used as a medium of communication at the English court, and among the nobility, so that he had the advantage of knowing it familiarly. As he had resolved to avoid every place where there was any likelihood of his being recognised, he did not go to Calais. There were several English refugees at the court of Burgundy, and he might also have been received and entertained there, but he did not desire it, and he did not pass through the Burgundian dominions.

The Continent had its own share of troubles: the restless spirit of Charles the Bold had first kept his father's subjects, and now his own, in a constant state of commotion. The politic French monarch had long been obliged to defend himself against a body of confederates, who, with many individual interested motives, formed a league which they were pleased to denominate the 'Weal Publique.' Italy was groaning beneath the yokes of many masters, and her fair provinces were wasted by their contentions for power. These were not the days of continental tourists; the Rhine was guiltless of steam navigation; its castellated towers, yet unshorn of their pristine grandeur, looked out upon its waves; and when the wearied steps of our English traveller reached the banks, he gazed upon those waters with the touching recollection, that only a few years had gone by since the ashes of martyrs and confessors had floated on their surface. One of those battlemented strongholds had lately been the prison of one,¹ the flames of whose pile had kindled a torch destined to be extinguished only by blood.

The gallant Visca was no more, and Bohemia was trodden down and oppressed; the remnant of her Hussites and her Taborites were scattered far and wide, and popery triumphed. But had the Bohemian Calixtenes still kept

¹ John Huss.

the field, De Clifford would not have joined their standard. He honoured their protest against the encroaching dictation of Rome, but he felt that there was more of the leaven of earth in their camps than he could have approved. Our traveller turned a longing eye towards the abodes of the Vaudois in the valleys of Piedmont. If these primitive Christians did not widely send out missionaries to the benighted lands around, they maintained their own faith in its simplicity and sincerity, and nobly confessed it in the midst of threatened danger and actual persecution. The wandering Hussites had not yet united themselves to these children of the mountains, but the followers of Peter Valdo had greatly increased their numbers, as, flying from the sword of persecution in France, they finally settled themselves in the bosom of the Alps. This, then, was the destination De Clifford had marked out for himself, and thither he journeyed at the slow and tardy pace of a solitary pedestrian. For a long time he cherished the hope of finding some means of sending a communication to England; but, after many disappointments, he became at length fully aware of the difficulty of accomplishing his wishes. No mail then conveyed letters to anxious distant friends, as now, from kingdom to kingdom.¹ De Clifford could trust no one with his secret, and who was there travelling to England that would regard the commands of a poor, homeless, nameless wanderer? It was after being fully persuaded of all these obstacles, that he had formed the resolution of keeping a sort of epistolary journal, with the view of its being transmitted to Julia Pierrepoint some time or other.

After many adventures and escapes, the Earl at length came in view of the country of his temporary adoption. At the close of the day he arrived at the entrance of a mountain pass; the defile was so narrow that it seemed to

¹ Note O.

him as if a single arm could almost defend it against a host. There was a long distance yet to be traversed before he could reach an inhabited valley ; and, wearied and way-worn, he sat down to recruit his strength before he should make an attempt to descend. The scene before him was a magnificent one. The lofty peaks which rose to a stupendous height above him, covered with the snow and ice of ages, were now glittering in prismatic colours. The scene and the associations it awakened were interesting in the extreme, and De Clifford was fully alive to the impression ; but after the first burst of admiration had subsided, the painful recollection of his own situation weighed upon his thoughts. The exile turned a mental glance on his own deserted home, and longed for the privilege of conveying the expression of his thoughts to the loved and distant shore.

He was aroused by the sound of a horn reverberating from echo to echo. It was speedily followed by a human voice chanting a sentence which he could not make out. These sounds did not appear to be from a great distance ; but before he could ascertain exactly whence they issued, another horn, at a greater distance, answered the signal, a third and fourth succeeded, but less distinctly, and the astonished listener was entranced. There was something delightful in the sounds themselves ; moreover, they assured him that he was not far from some dwellings, and he bent his steps in the direction from which he supposed the first and nearest sound to proceed. It was not long before he came in sight of a shepherd's hut, and observed a solitary individual leading his flock to their night quarters.

It was not, dear young reader, a romantic abode like that pretty model Swiss cottage of yours. If you have been in the Alps, you may have seen a cattle shed ; and, perhaps, the shelter afforded to De Clifford on the first night of his repose there may not have been much better. No

doubt it was pleasant to go forth when the sun arose and shed a glow on those wondrous pinnacles of nature, that, seen for the first time, make an impression not easily forgotten;—pleasant to tread on that native carpet of green, sprinkled with the crocuses of autumn; here and there the blue gentianella and the lingering blossoms of the dwarf pink, for it was late in the year when our traveller reached the spot. Nature gave her beauties liberally, but no garden of man's forming was there. And down, down in a yawning chasm, a river tumbled and roared as it hastened on its way, chafing at every obstacle, towards its destined purpose of bearing on its broad expanse many a craft in the coming time.

The simple mountaineer showed some symptoms of alarm on seeing a stranger at such a place and hour; but on being assured by De Clifford, in the best way he could make himself understood, that he was a benighted traveller seeking shelter, the shepherd brought him to his humble abode, and quickly spread before him, with hospitable alacrity, the best entertainment his slender means could afford. Men, however, there were, and men, too, of high standing in the world's esteem, who had personated the pilgrim, and sought these simple people in their fastnesses, affecting the sincerity of anxious inquirers until they had learned all that was in their hearts and belief; then, instead of honourably acquitting them of accusations brought against them by enemies, and which they had now proof of being false, they warped all the confessions they had extracted to the basest purposes, and falsely requited the unsuspecting hospitality that had made them acquainted with their homes, by leading the way to entrap them. When the mock trial was brought about which had been beforehand determined to end in condemnation, the *soi-disant* pupil was to be found bearing false witness, after having aided in weaving such a snare as the victim

could not, by any human effort, escape. These facts were, through bitter experience, universally known among the Vaudois. Yet the sacred character of a stranger procured for the traveller the shelter he required. De Clifford's knowledge of French availed him little with the shepherd, whose strange and mingled dialect was new to him. A few words, however, they mutually understood, and by dint of gesticulation, by which foreigners so dexterously contrive or endeavour to fill up every hiatus in conversational difficulties, the Earl believed he could gather, that the sweet sounds which had so pleasantly attracted him, were signals established among the shepherds who pastured their flocks on the neighbouring heights by which they warned each other that the hour was come when, by mutual consent, they prepared for worship. This was very delightful, and when a longer residence had rendered him acquainted with the habits of this interesting people, he found his interpretation had been correct.

Notwithstanding the difficulty of holding verbal communication, the Earl had not certainly felt himself so happy for a long time, as when he that night stretched himself upon a hard pallet, after uniting in heart with the shepherd in prayer and praise. He cast some anxious thoughts to the future, as excitement kept him for a while from sleep. His purse was becoming lighter, and he knew not how nor when it could be replenished; but what of that? Was he not to trust farther than he could see what men call certainty? The Duke of Exeter begged his bread in Burgundy. The Earl de Clifford had no scruple about using his talents to support himself by honest industry. He had left his rank in England; his garments had been of the plainest at starting, and were by no means likely to betray the station of the wearer, who determined to distinguish himself simply by his Christian name in this the land of his sojourning. On the following day our traveller

proceeded on his journey, and had many a mile to go before his eyes rested on vineyards, and chestnut groves, and rich fields of Indian corn. He did not find much difficulty in introducing himself among the simple-minded and Christian people of the Piedmontese valleys. Here, then, he took up his abode, and notwithstanding the longings of heart that turned homewards, he was often constrained to say, 'The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places'—pleasant because the Lord's presence was there with those who 'kept the faith so pure of old.'

Although the language of the unlettered peasant, with whom he spent the first night of his sojourn among the Vaudois, rendered conversation in a connected manner impossible, there were many residing in the valleys with whom he could interchange observations intelligibly enough. Among them he learned how much cause they had to be suspicious of a stranger coming into their society as he did. He was assured that if his design was to ascertain the nature of their faith and mode of worship, he should find it only such as their forefathers received from the early apostles. 'We own no other rule of life,' said they, 'but the Holy Scriptures, and our barbs¹ teach us the doctrines contained in the Bible.'

During the early period of his exile, he persevered in incessant inquiries after an opportunity of conveying a letter to England, but not the most distant prospect of such an event seemed to open. Once or twice an heretical British wanderer had found his way into the valleys; but, like himself, they were uncertain of their return.

The Vaudois shuddered at the thoughts of a journey to England, ever associating it in their minds with the treatment of a band of brethren and sisters, who had emigrated to the British island in the time of Henry the Second, and

¹ Note P.

had there suffered martyrdom in the most barbarous manner at the hand of bigotry.

De Clifford soon became inured to privation and fatigue ; and in the exercise of the best philosophy, even that which teaches that all things are rightly ordered and sure, he endured the trials to which his patience was subjected. His mind still turned, however, with anxious thought to his country, and he speculated with no little interest on the opening character of the youthful prince, then residing with his royal mother at the Castle of Keurure, near St. Michael, in the diocess of Verdun. Resolved to learn some particulars of him, the Earl journeyed to the place of his abode, and in the course of his inquiries gathered very pleasing intelligence of the young scion of the house of Lancaster. But he wished to see him in the circle wherein he moved, and to judge in some measure for himself. This was not to be accomplished easily, for he saw no good at all likely to arise from revealing his real station at that time. It was then that he first had assumed the guise of a minstrel, and, as a member of that privileged profession, found ready access to the Castle of Keurure, and into the presence of the English refugees. De Clifford made use of this stratagem several times afterwards, and gathered information, by these means, which fully satisfied his mind as to the hopeful promise of future excellence which had finally determined him to adhere to the fortunes of the prince. But years must pass before Edward could be of an age to claim his rights; there was little present prospect of support for his cause; and De Clifford would do nothing that should involve the responsibility of originating another civil war.

His taste for music led him to devote a little time to its improvement in the musical school of Italy, and this occupation was associated with matters of deeper import than superficial observers were aware of—nay, the bards of Italy

were paving the way for a work they themselves did not comprehend in all its consequences.

The countries on which the light of the Reformation was about to shine, were as yet enveloped in the dark clouds of superstition and ignorance, although signs of life were beginning to manifest themselves. Germany had not yet awoke from her deep trance, though Huss and Jerome had already suffered martyrdom. But there were notes of preparation sounding in corners. Italy, the very seat of the papal power, was not at rest. Dante and Petrarch had dared to employ their genius to depict the vices that disgraced the reigning church, and their poetry was spread far and wide by the instrumentality of the wandering troubadours; wherever they journeyed their songs tended to shake in the minds of the people that abject idolatry with which they were wont to regard the Roman priesthood. It was one of those popular ballads De Clifford had sung on being requested to use his voice at Pierrepont Manor.

These means may appear trivial in themselves to lead to the accomplishment of such an end; but Dante's genius contributed in preparing the way for men of a more catholic spirit, who not only condemned error, who did so not in bitter irony, or in light satire, but in grief of heart for the deluded, while they also laboured to show them the way of truth. Poor benighted Spain responded to the call, and Italy gave up her hundreds of martyrs.

De Clifford would gladly have visited Florence, where the arts and sciences were springing to perfection beneath the fostering care of the De Medici. But it was an uncongenial atmosphere, even in a political point of view; for it was the gold of these Florentine merchant princes that helped Edward the Fourth through his difficulties. In a religious sense it was worse. Plato found more devoted admirers among the revivers of letters than Paul of

Tarsus ; and Rome still held their consciences in fetters, although contentions for secular advantages sometimes took place between the masters of Florence and the Pope.

De Clifford, then, spent the greater proportion of his time among the Vaudois, making occasional journeys elsewhere. It was during one of these that Risby had left the valleys for England, to his grievous and bitter disappointment.

No tidings from the land of his birth had yet cheered his exile. He was sure his friends must have concluded that he was dead. Such were his melancholy reflections, as he was pursuing his way in a solitary ramble one evening, when a traveller suddenly presented himself. Could he be deceived ? Was it the visions of other days floating on his mind, that had so wrought up his imagination, as to make him believe he now gazed on a once-familiar face ? or was it really so, that he saw one he knew ? He was soon assured by the exclamation of the stranger : 'My master ! my master ! I have then found you at last. Have you forgotten Blondel ?'

He had not forgotten Blondel, and with him were linked a thousand associations he could never forget. The page was speedily led to the Earl's dwelling, where he gave to his interested listener a narrative full of importance to him. But Blondel was months resident in Piedmont before De Clifford had exhausted his questions, or the page his story. He was instructed to maintain entire silence on the subject of the Earl's rank ; but Blondel, while he strictly obeyed this injunction, retained so much of his former feelings towards his master, that his very respectful deference, and anxiety to serve him, had more than once well-nigh betrayed the long-kept secret.

In a little time, Swinderby, through Blondel's information, joined their society ; and how precious was the narrative he, so fully, could give ! It was with feelings of no

common interest De Clifford received the confessor as a Christian brother, and his own burden seemed lighter as he listened to the familiar accents of his country, and looked upon the well-known features of his faithful servant.

The Earl at length determined to make himself known to the Prince of Wales, in the belief that it might be some encouragement to the royal refugee, to be assured that his rights and his cause were yet warmly cherished by some, at least, of the ancient adherents of his house.

It was needful, however, to proceed with caution, as he wished the prince alone to be the depository of his secret. Blondel was harp-bearer, and they set out for Verdun. By watching the habits of the royal youth, De Clifford at length contrived to make known to him his name, with an assurance of his allegiance. Edward promised inviolable secrecy, and besought his friend to continue to visit him occasionally in his disguise. Accordingly, the Piedmontese minstrel struck his chords at intervals in the halls of Keurure, by the prince alone recognised as one whom he yet hoped to choose among his chief advisers in the guidance of England's government.

As soon as rumours of the Earl of Warwick's conference with Queen Margaret reached De Clifford, he hastened to join the prince. He took an affectionate leave of his Christian friends of the fastnesses where he had so long found a home; and resuming his proper designation, attached himself openly to the Lancastrian cause. His presence was so prompt, that he was by the Prince of Wales hailed as the first-fruits of the English nobility; and the humble and pious mountaineers were lost in astonishment, when they learned the station in society of brother Howard, who had so long and so simply dwelt among them.

Lord de Clifford would have remained in France till the

embarkation of the prince, but that it was impossible he should delay for an hour his journey to England.

Swinderby and Blondel declared their resolution to accompany him, though they adhered strictly to their peaceable vocation. They were fully determined not to lose sight of the Earl till the fate of England was decided.

There remains little to add to this rapid sketch. So speedily was King Edward put to flight, that no rumour of De Clifford's appearance in England could travel to Pierrepont Manor before himself; and with the remainder of his history, up to this point, the reader is already acquainted.

The day after her brother's departure, Julia had a message from Clifford Castle, saying, that the Countess was very anxious to see her. She would gladly have been spared the visit, but she did not like to decline it. On arriving, she found an unwonted bustle going on; the cause of this change was evident. Lady de Clifford received her with marks of deep emotion. 'I sent for you,' she said, 'because, as I was first drawn towards you by your sympathy in my sorrow, I think it right you should be the first to whom I should impart my joy. I could not see you yesterday, I kept my room and set myself to school my feelings; that is now done; my mind is made up as to the course I shall pursue, and I am myself again. Clifford Castle has been my abode from youth to age, and is very dear to me; but it is time I should leave it in other hands.'

'Dear Lady de Clifford, how do you mean?' inquired Julia.

'I hope to see brighter auspices gild these old walls than have shone on them for many a year,' she said; 'but I must seek a home more congenial to my age and habits than it could, for the future, be to me. My own paternal

halls lie deserted, and there, where my infancy was cradled, I will close my old age.'

'I am sure,' observed Julia, 'your son would rejoice in being the solace of your declining years.'

'My son and I have essential differences which suit not those who dwell together,' observed the Countess; 'they are on points which admit of no concession, and we are better apart. The recollection of this has been the one only alloy to my present complete satisfaction; yet it may be that his long residence abroad has happily brought back his mind to a rightful condition. He says nought on the subject in the letter he has written to me.'

Julia knew how entirely different the case stood; she knew that the Earl had been greatly confirmed and strengthened in his faith by the knowledge, experience, and historical facts of those who, from the primitive times, had held the faith which Paul preached; but she made no remark, and Lady de Clifford proceeded—

'However it may be, when I have seen him tread these halls again, and my eyes have satisfied me that he lives, my concerns here are at an end. It has been to me the scene of important events—days of pain and pleasure; the separation will cost a pang, but it must be.'

'Dear madam, why must it be?' inquired Julia.

'Because of my own unalterable determination,' said the lady. 'From the hour I became a member of it, the family dignity has been my idol. It has not sped quite as I wished; but let that pass. A nobler De Clifford than my Howard has never been master of their ancient house. You see I have already commenced preparations for my son's reception; matters have been by degrees mended since first you became my occasional guest; but much remained undone. I would not the old doors should creak on their hinges, as if unwilling to admit their rightful

lord ; neither would I have him to know that I dwelt in a wilderness. But where is Sir Henry ?'

Julia's face crimsoned, as she replied with a sigh, 'I can scarcely tell ; he left me to go to London.'

'To London,' repeated the Countess ; 'to do what ?'

'To endeavour to aid the Yorkists,' she replied.

'This is preposterous !' exclaimed Lady de Clifford hastily. 'Gone to battle against the whole force of England, to defend a cause now irremediably lost ! It was rash in the extreme, and may thwart all my endeavours to serve him.'

'Oh ! tell me if there is any fresh intelligence,' cried Julia, in alarm.

'Only,' replied the Countess, 'that there remains no shadow of opposition to my cousin Warwick. I have received a message from him to inquire how he could serve me. I asked in reply, protection for Pierrepont Manor, with the assurance that Sir Henry had never carried arms in the quarrel ; and now this thoughtless step may spoil all. But we must endeavour to remedy the evil before Warwick ceases to be the responsible head in this country ; which will not be till a more energetic person than Henry fills the throne. Richard Neville ought to sympathize with the side he once so warmly espoused. I have sent Aymer out of the way to Ravenham ; it will eventually be his own, and there he shall remain to make preparations for my reception.'

'And are you then so decided on a removal there, that nothing shall be able to change your determination ?' inquired Julia.

'We shall not talk more upon the subject now,' observed Lady de Clifford, and Julia acquiesced. Her judgment told her that the resolution of the Countess to have a home entirely her own was prudent ; but she found it difficult to go into the masculine train of thought that

had enabled her to make up her mind at once on a matter that involved so many heart yearnings. She imagined that a single day and night were scarcely sufficient to compose a mother's mind under circumstances like those of Lady de Clifford. The fact of her son's being alive—of his being actually in England—of his being soon to return to the house of his fathers, and the place he was born to fill—the recollections associated with his departure—the manner of their separation—the anticipations of meeting—all, all these things she thought would have been sufficient to engross the mind and exclude the very consideration of future plans. But Julia had no line to fathom a mind of a construction so different from her own, and during the remainder of her stay she avoided the subject. She returned to the Manor full of anxiety for tidings of her brother.

He made his appearance sooner than she could have anticipated; and she was rejoiced to receive him. The hopes of his party were blighted, his own pride had received a bitter lesson, and he had never met Julia, after the shortest absence, with so much coldness as on this occasion. It was not that he was more indifferent to her than usual, but it was the feeling that he had something to disclose, that he would conceal if he could.'

'I am so glad to see you safe back,' she said, as she ran to meet him. 'I know your cause has not triumphed,' she added, as she looked in his disappointed countenance; 'but all is in good hands, dear Henry, and it is so comforting to hear that there has been no bloodshed.'

'You are eloquent, Julia,' remarked her brother, dryly, as he disencumbered himself of his armour; 'but it remains to be seen what may be the end of this business. I am tired enough for the present, however; so let us out of this passage.'

Seeing how much disconcerted he was, she forbore to

make any further observations. Henry maintained a sullen silence unusually long; but at last he pulled out a letter, and throwing it on the table, said—

‘There is what I carried for you. The red rose flourishes, and doubtless the particulars are set forth there in all their splendour; as for me, I suppose the Manor shall not much longer call me master.’

‘Dear Henry,’ she said, ‘your anticipations are too gloomy. The peaceable nature of this revolution seems to promise fair. You have done nothing that you should be singled out as an object of resentment.’

‘If I did not, it was my misfortune, not my fault,’ he rejoined.

‘Henry, what could—what can you do?’ she remonstrated; ‘can you govern impossibilities? I can assure you there is powerful interest at work on your behalf. I do not at all apprehend the serious consequences to which your words point. I beseech you do not gratuitously invite your own destruction, by such expressions as you have just made use of.’

‘I seek no interest, and I shall solicit no favour,’ he said hastily; and his sister saw it was of no use to argue the matter in his present excited state. The Earl’s letter explained the adventure which had so irritated her brother, and she judged it best to make no allusion to it until the cloud should pass from his own mind.

CHAPTER XXII.



THE new government was soon established; London had returned to as quiescent a condition as it usually enjoyed, and De Clifford longed after his home, and again to see his only parent.

Advancing years and stern trials had their due effect upon the mind of the Countess, and had abated, though not eradicated, the natural severity of her temper. Her maternal feelings were aroused in the prospect of again beholding the son who was still the delight of her eyes; and it was with no common satisfaction she saw the alacrity with which her old domestics exerted themselves to prepare for the return of the master who had been brought up among them. The whole establishment was in motion, and in employment.

Aymer still remained at Ravenham; the visionary coronet that had glittered before his eyes had disappeared, and although he was volatile, he was not devoid of affection: it was pleasant to have a brother. It is true, the superiority of Howard's talents had often created a little jealousy; but his brother wore his honours so becomingly, and made such generous use of his advantages, that he could not but own to himself, that if Howard outshone him, it was not because he tried to do so, but because he could not help it. He hoped for personal security from his connection with the Earl of Warwick,

and through his brother's influence, and with the estates of Ravenham in reversion, he did not despair of pleasant years to come. He made up his mind to stay where he was, till he should hear how matters went on at Clifford Castle.

As for the Earl, his mind was highly wrought up as he approached his ancient home. Regardless of the fatigue of the previous journey, he urged on his horse; his anxiety to see it becoming more and more intense as the distance shortened. He wished to outstrip his train, to indulge the luxury of greeting the first sight of the longed-for object alone. There was a turning-point in the road, where he knew he should obtain a full view; and pressing forward, the magnificent pile rose before him, and he stood still a few moments to gaze upon it. His own banner was waving from the summit, while the turrets and battlements stood out in strong relief from the cold clear blue of a frosty winter sky. Recollections crowded as he travelled over the well-known scenes of his boyhood. He longed to give utterance to the thoughts that gladdened his heart, and in the impulse of the moment, he stooped to stroke his horse's neck, saying, 'I have tired you, my poor fellow; but we are near our journey's end, and you shall be well rewarded.' As he sat again erect in his saddle, he observed a groom coming towards him with a led horse. It was his own old groom, and—could it be?—yes, it was his favourite Agincourt!

'Ferrars!' exclaimed De Clifford.

'Yes, my lord,' said the man, putting his hand to his hat, and looking delighted at the Earl's recognition of him. 'Her ladyship thought perhaps your lordship would like to ride Agincourt, and she sent me on with him.'

'So I shall,' said the Earl, gratified by this mark of tenderness, and immediately dismounted.

Once more mounted as of old, and attended by Ferrars,

he approached the castle as he was wont to do in former years. His mother met him at the entrance. She was greatly affected; few words were exchanged; but her emotion was manifest as she ascended the staircase, leaning heavily on her son's arm. They were left alone, and De Clifford, leading his mother to a seat, placed himself beside her. She silently examined his features for a while, before she said, 'You are much changed, Howard.'

'I am older by some years than when you last saw me,' he observed.

'Nay, I could not fancy six years, at your time of life, would have wrought so great an alteration,' she rejoined, as her thoughts suggested that the countenance of her son bore the impress of privation and exposure to climate. There was the same expression of firm resolve in his dark eye, but it was tempered by more mildness than it had evinced in his younger years.

'I am, at least, unchanged in affection, my dear mother,' he said; 'as I trust to prove to your satisfaction henceforward.'

She sighed, but made no reply, and the Earl inquired, 'Why his brother was not at home to receive him?'

'Aymer is at Ravenham,' answered the lady; 'he is sensible of being under a cloud at present. It will, however, pass away I hope.'

'His political fears may be hushed,' said the Earl; 'and I cannot allow him to remain absent, when I am mercifully restored once more in peace to the shelter of that roof which witnessed the affection of our childhood. My brother must come to participate in my pleasure; I shall send to him tomorrow.'

When De Clifford retired to his own apartment, he sat long absorbed in deep and varied thought. He took out the Bible that had been the companion of all his wanderings, and read: 'Here have we no continuing city, but we

seek one to come.¹ The words recalled him to the consideration, that although he was now in a splendid home which he could call his own, it had not in itself the elements of satisfaction. He devoutly wished for grace to 'use this world as not abusing it,' and remembered that it was 'often more difficult to maintain a Christian spirit in prosperity, than in adversity. He was literally entering on a new sphere, and new duties. The position he was about to occupy was surrounded by snares, he pleaded that he might not be suffered to forget that he was but a pilgrim and a sojourner. Before he slept he wrote an affectionate letter to his brother, to be despatched early the following morning, and closed his eyes in peace with all men.

The day of their meeting had passed over without any allusion to the solemn subject of that religious difference which subsisted, as before, between the mother and son; but De Clifford felt that trial on that score still awaited him. The Countess was not altogether what she had been; but her son was well aware that on the point of his separation from the Romish Church, her mind could not be changed while her creed remained the same.

It was the Earl's intention to go to Pierrepont Manor early the next day, and, on his return, to speak to his mother of the arrangement then to be made. She, however, was herself the first to introduce the subject.

'I suppose, Howard, you will to-day pay your duty at the Manor. Before you go, it is my wish to tell you that I have learned to look upon Sir Henry Pierrepont's sister with affection. This is, in its own way, a revolution perhaps as little expected as the great political one which has just taken place. I must own that I have had my misgivings concerning the propriety of an intimacy with one from whom I differ on the most momentous subject. I could not help it; I was won by her gentleness, and my

¹ Heb. xiii. 14.

esteem was secured by her solid and excellent qualities. Yet I could not have received her as I did, had I not hoped our acquaintance might lead to the enlightening of her mind, that she might return to the true faith. Then, indeed, she would be a treasure; but I have, as yet, seen no fruits to cheer me on that point. And now, Howard, I suppose I shall soon see you united; and did I not know that then you will but confirm each other in error, I should rejoice in the prospect as much as once I deprecated it. Here, however, is the bar to my future peace: I am doomed to experience sorrow through those from whom I might derive the greatest joy. I do sadly fear that I have yet to mourn over your spiritual state; for were there any change such as I desire, the morning of this eventful day would have seen you seek your chapel—would have witnessed some inquiry after your confessor.'

'Mother,' said the Earl, 'I cannot break the quiet harmony of this day by discussion. Let each of us apply at the Fountain, for light to guide us, and it will not be denied. I rejoice to hear your testimony to the worth that has long attached me to one who had not always the good fortune to receive your approbation. I hope to ask soon for her, at your hands, a maternal blessing; and I am sure she will second me in my endeavours to comfort your future years.'

'Howard,' said the Countess, emphatically, 'I wish you may enjoy all the happiness you expect. I may hear more than I can see of it. I do not much longer remain an inmate of Clifford Castle; I mean shortly to remove to Ravenham, to pass my few remaining days in humble imitation of the sainted Beatrice, after whom I was named. I cannot cure your strange delusion, neither can I sanction it by my presence.'

'But Julia—' began the Earl.

'Julia Pierrepont,' interrupted his mother, 'is already

aware of my decision. It has not been made only now; my resolution was taken the very day after I received from yourself tidings of your arrival in England. You must not attempt to urge me. I have two weighty reasons: I must have a home where I shall command; I cannot consent to bring sin on my conscience by being the passive and stated witness of heretical pravity.'

The Earl passed his hand across his brow, as the thought occurred, 'This, then, is the bitter ingredient already found in my cup of joy.'

His mother observed the motion; she laid her hand on his arm, as she said, 'I cannot think you will be left in final error—I have commended you to the saints. As to my plans for the future, we shall discuss them at our leisure. Meantime, I detain you not.' So saying, she left the room.

De Clifford had already written to Henry Pierrepont, assuring him he need fear no molestation from the new government. Sir Henry's adherence to the cause of Edward was entirely a point of personal honour; he had now come to the resolution of yielding quietly to the sweeping tide that was carrying everything before it. All needful explanations being made, Henry was prepared to meet De Clifford as he desired. On his arrival at the Manor, Pierrepont received him alone. His manner was rather more serious than usual, as he shook the Earl by the hand, and motioned him to a seat. De Clifford opened his proposal by saying, that the revolution having placed him in circumstances which, but a year ago, he scarcely dared to anticipate, he hoped no further obstacle should prevent his calling by his own name, one to whom he had in heart been so long united.

'De Clifford,' said Henry, 'I feel that were I disposed to object, I could not with any propriety do so. But when I give my consent, it is frankly and heartily; and

therefore, I shall not hesitate to say, that there is not in England a man I would so soon call my brother. In Julia's absence I may say, that I give you what I consider a very precious gift; but you know how to appreciate her better than I do, and I am satisfied. May the sun of prosperity shine on your path!

Henry was not prone to the melting mood, but he was affected, and made an awkward attempt to conceal it.

'I am very badly treated,' he added. 'The last time I entered a house of yours, it was as a prisoner; and now you come to mine to rob it of its chief attraction; and when you have carried her off, I suppose I may live here as I list. This surely is hard usage under the guise of friendship; and I am expected to bear it all with that meekness of temper, and patience, for which I have always been so remarkable. But I shall bring the case before a lady, and shall abide satisfied with her decision; to this arrangement no gallant knight could, I think, offer any objection.'

'I submit to my fate,' answered the Earl, smiling. And Henry, rising, led the way to Julia's favourite apartment, where he left him to plead his own cause. There De Clifford was contented to be left, nor did he find his sentence very hard to bear.

With the purport of this visit Julia was, of course, well acquainted; yet it was with no small degree of agitation she received the Earl. Their conference was a long one; there was much to tell and to arrange. Every barrier that stood in the way of their union had been removed in a wonderful manner, and after all their fears and troubles the day was at length named that was to witness the uniting of their earthly destinies.

It was agreed that Swinderby should pronounce the nuptial benediction; but this required management. No one could dispute Lord de Clifford's right, with his bride's

consent, to appoint whom he pleased on such an occasion; but it would be the general impression that the office ought to be performed by a dignitary of the church. The chief difficulty lay in the necessity for Swinderby's concealment. He was, of course, obliged to maintain a strict *incognito* in the neighbourhood; and might, in that manner, under favour of the Earl's protection, be safe for a time; but caution was necessary. The brethren had never heard of him since the receipt of his own letter, containing his confession of heresy. His mysterious disappearance caused it to be reported that he had been made away with; they did not think fit to publish any contradiction afterwards, judging it better to suffer the whole matter to sink into oblivion, than that it should be known he had left their communion. Swinderby had thus escaped clerical degradation, and in the eye of the law was perfectly qualified to administer all the rites of the church. His concealment was also favoured by the general agitation of the country; people were stunned by the extraordinary suddenness and magnitude of the national changes, and could think of little else. But it would still be imprudent to do anything calculated to throw the Wycliffite into the power of his enemies, and nothing was more likely to hasten a discovery than his officiating at the Earl de Clifford's marriage. For this, and other reasons, it was determined that the ceremony should be conducted with as much privacy and simplicity as possible; and it was hoped the secluded life the Countess had led for some years, would incline her to sacrifice her love of magnificence to her dislike to mixed company. Julia undertook to gain her brother over to the plan, and the Earl returned home to hold a conference with his mother. His communication was only such as she expected; and she made no objections to any of her son's proposals. But on one point she was no less anxious than curious; and at the close of the con-

versation, she observed that in the whole matter she had made up her mind to be passive, save in one important particular: she must know something of the officiating clergyman. Her son had no scruple in assuring her that he was a regularly ordained priest, whom he had known abroad, intimately, and one whom he had much cause to esteem personally. She expressed herself satisfied, and turned her thoughts towards a speedy removal to Ravenham, where she intended to take up her abode, before any change in the establishment at Clifford Castle had taken place.

Meantime, Swinderby was a frequent visitor at the Castle; but he was always received by the Earl alone. Some curiosity began to be excited about one who flitted backwards and forwards so mysteriously; but except that he was believed to be some foreign friend of the Earl's, no one learned anything more concerning him. Blondel took up a temporary abode at some little distance, for his person was too well known to risk an appearance, for the present, very near the precincts of the Castle.

In the course of a few weeks everything was ready at Ravenham; and in order to soften the pain she must feel on quitting, as a home, the place where she had dwelt so many long years, De Clifford determined to accompany and remain with his mother until she should appear to be comfortably settled, when he would return to prepare for the reception of his bride.

The next meeting of Lady de Clifford and her son was to be at Pierrepoint Manor, where she consented to go the day before the marriage.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE marriage day arrived, and Swinderby was in early attendance at the Castle to accompany the Earl to Pierrepoint Manor. He had consented, once more, to wear a priestly garb; for without it he could not be seen in the performance of his destined office.

‘There is no occurrence, save this single one, that could induce me again to wear this livery,’ he said, as he entered Lord de Clifford’s apartment, robed.

‘My friend,’ said the Earl, ‘the outward garment signifies little. It is a light thing whether we be in black, or white—in a gown or a plain coat.’

‘True, my lord,’ responded Swinderby, ‘still, I place some importance on these distinctions. So much has been made of them, that the ignorant people learn to make up the sum of their religion in forms and habits, in garments and buildings, till their inmost hearts bow in base idolatry before them, and the soul meantime is a moral wilderness, instead of a watered garden. But I see your lordship’s brother coming to announce that all is in readiness for our departure.’

Julia had suddenly received notice that Swinderby was watched, and it was desirable he should leave the Manor as soon after the marriage as possible. She did not expect to see him until they should meet in the chapel, and could

have no opportunity of a private word; she must commit this important duty to her brother. As she took his arm to descend, she said earnestly, 'Henry, I have one request to make, you must not refuse me.'

'It shall be a strange one if I do,' he responded.

'You know,' she resumed, 'that Mr. Swinderby must be in considerable danger of recognition here; but I have come to the knowledge of a circumstance that has added much to my anxiety on his account. I have reason to fear that he is already suspected, and will to-day be closely observed.'

'I really do not see what I can do in this affair,' said Henry. 'By my counsel he should never have been in the situation he now occupies; but it was a matter, for many reasons, I did not choose to gainsay.'

'You, and you alone, can serve him,' she pleaded. 'Take the first opportunity of giving him a hint of his danger, and that the sooner he quits the Manor the better.'

'I will try, Julia,' replied her brother. 'I suppose I must not say nay to a bride, though you have not set me an easy task, and I wish I may not mismanage it. The best thing he can do is to slip away when we leave the chapel, which he may contrive to effect without observation; and now, is this all?'

'All,' she said.

'Then I shall do my best. Julia Pierrepoint shall not have to accuse her humble knight of refusing the last request she made him.'

Henry wished to appear gay, but his effort was not very successful; for he was more affected than he cared to allow any one to see. The party was assembled in the chapel waiting their appearance, when he entered with his sister.

The Countess was gorgeous; but her countenance wore an expression not altogether satisfied, for there was a struggle within. Aymer de Clifford shone in the brightest

and latest costume. Sir Henry Pierrepont was not behind in personal decoration; and the Earl de Clifford and his bride, though appalled as became their station, were the least glittering of the group. The high forehead and keen eye of the Earl bespoke, even to a casual observer, that determined firmness which was his natural characteristic. Had the world still reigned in his heart, this might have degenerated into sternness, under the pressure of earth's trials. But it was not so; and there was a benignity of expression superadded which seemed to flow from the possession of that peace which passes all understanding. The day fortunately was dark, and Swinderby stood in a situation favourable to the concealment of his features. He was agitated; but it was more by the associations connected with his present locality, than the effect of personal fear. His deep-toned and solemn voice broke the silence that reigned in the chapel, as he commenced the marriage service.

When it was concluded there was a pause of a few minutes, after which Henry took De Clifford's hand, saying, 'I give you a brother's greeting;' he then put his sister's veil gently aside, and imprinted a kiss on her forehead.

Swinderby stood back until all the congratulations were at an end; he then approached, and holding out his hand to Julia, said, 'Lady de Clifford, I have long ceased to speak the world's language. I talk not to you of honours and long life, though I wish for you all that is best and fairest; but my prayers shall be presented on your behalf, that you may walk worthy of your vocation; and that you may bear in continual remembrance, that in all events, whether prosperous or adverse, you can be safe, and safe only, beneath the shadow of the "Rock of Ages." It is not worldly compliment I owe you, it is something far higher. Lord de Clifford,' he added, then addressing him, 'may the clouds that long hung over you, and are now, I trust, dis-

solving, continue to pour blessings on your head; and may you be helps meet for each other, till death do you part.'

Sir Henry Pierrepoint watched his old confessor narrowly; he only made a respectful bow to him, and retired to a little distance. But Henry had not forgotten his sister's request. He stepped up to Swinderby, under colour of doing the honours of his house, and thus managed to convey the desired hint. The stratagem was unobserved, and he said in an under tone, 'You are watched; your appearance in this neighbourhood is whispered about; you had better see to your own safety, for I can do no more than warn you.'

'This is no time nor place to express all I desire to say to you, Sir Henry,' replied Swinderby in the same low tone; 'but my heart has pined for an opportunity to say that I need your forgiveness for all the error that I ever taught you. Then I was myself in darkness; what light I have received I pray you may receive in double measure. I wish I were privileged to be the messenger to you of the blessed freedom of the gospel; even I, who did misuse the power I once held, to subject your mind in bondage to the "beggarly elements" of an apostate church.'

A sudden flush suffused Sir Henry's face. He, however, took Swinderby's offered hand, and merely said, 'You had better take speedy advantage of my advice.'

'I shall,' he answered, 'and I pray the ray of light so long given to your house do not this day go out. You have no heart, Sir Henry, to enter into the secrets of those men whom you take it for granted are holy. Well may I say, who know them better, "Unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united."'

There was no time for more conversation; the colloquy, though not overheard, had already attracted notice. But Sir Henry, as if nothing of interest had passed, was imme-

diately by the side of the old Countess, apparently in his usual gay mood, leading her away from the chapel.

When they reached the hall, Lady de Clifford missed the priest, and inquired what had become of him. Sir Henry replied that he could not remain, as he had urgent business elsewhere. The Countess had reasons for not thinking this account of the matter satisfactory, but she made no further remark, and the subject was suffered to drop.

We have now seen the union of those, the history of whose lives has formed the principal subject in these memorials of the olden time; and here, according to the common rule of story, we might leave them. But the most difficult duties and trials of life frequently begin where its romance ends, and therefore we pursue our narrative still, to trace their history through troubles which tended to exhibit more and more of character and of principle.

A temporary repose was granted to England, and at Clifford Castle a large share of that quiet and domestic enjoyment was experienced that outweighs every other species of earthly happiness. There, too, as elsewhere, the outward peace was doubly appreciated from the distractions that had preceded it. Again, the grounds around the dwelling had entirely resumed their order, and the influence of a genial English spring was beginning to call out her earliest blossoms. The old gardener was very busy; his industry had received a new impulse, and with something like the ardour of his youthful days, he laboured to beautify his flowery dominions. Again he saw the Earl pacing his favourite walk, but not alone. Julia now leaned on his arm, and would often stop to drop a word of encouragement or advice as she passed by the faithful Gilbert. The harp was a very favoured article of household stuff; it stood in Julia's private sitting apartment, as did that old cabinet where, on the eventful day when Lady de Clifford had announced to her son the expected visit of

King Edward, he had placed the scrap of music that had disconcerted her. He found it where he had left it, and, presenting it to his wife, told her that for her it had been written in the days of other years.

They were happy in each other's society; 'they spake often one to another' of the kingdom of heaven, and of the way in which they had been taught, and warned, and disciplined in the past. They were now permitted to tread in green pastures: duty and pleasure ran so entirely in the same channel, that they were perhaps in danger of forgetting the warning voice that still cries, 'Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest.'

De Clifford was soon in daily expectation of tidings that should call him to greet the Prince of Wales on his landing. He did not fear any show of opposition, yet he investigated the number of retainers on whom he could reckon in the possible emergency of any hostile design. At all events, a select and numerous band of his followers was destined to grace Prince Edward's triumphant progress to the capital; and however peaceable might be the aspect of affairs, he was resolved not to leave the Castle without a strong guard during his own short absence, while the command was to be entrusted to an officer of experience and courage, well qualified for the charge.

The Earl was one day engaged in detailing his plans to Julia, and talking of the probable term of his absence, when a page came into the room and presented him with a packet.

'Who is the bearer of this?' inquired De Clifford.

'A court messenger, my lord,' answered the page; and Julia turned pale, while the Earl hastily broke the seal and perused his letter.

'Let the messenger be well entertained, and he shall have my answer in a short time,' he said, and the page disappeared. As soon as they were again alone, he said,

‘Julia, I shall have to leave you sooner than I thought, and for rather a longer period. This is to inform me that the prince commands my presence in France.’

‘In France!’ she repeated in some alarm.

‘Yes, my Julia,’ he replied; ‘but only for a short time; he expects to embark for England almost immediately.’

‘And why demand your presence there?’ she asked.

‘He wishes to have my poor counsel,’ said the Earl, ‘and it is my duty to obey.’

There was a short silence. Julia was resolved she should not drop a hint of unwillingness to act her part, although she could see at a glance how difficult a part that might become.

‘Julia,’ said De Clifford at length, ‘when I was endeavouring to make arrangements for a very temporary absence, I did not contemplate going to so great a distance from you. The country is perfectly quiet; yet I almost feel inclined to propose your going to Pierrepont Manor till my return. Henry, of course, will keep himself quiet, it will be his best and wisest plan, until there be some settlement among us; and he will be at home until my return.’ The suggestion was more the fruit of his anxiety on her account than the dictation of the sound judgment that usually guided him. This Julia at once observed.

‘Howard,’ she said, ‘I shall remain where it has pleased Providence to fix my home. He who has hitherto sustained me, is able to direct and keep me throughout future trial and difficulty. I can only expect such aid, however, in the path of duty, not out of it. There is no doubt of the side Henry would take, in the possible event of war: you would be opposed. In that case, under his roof, of course, I could not remain. My brother is very dear to me; his house was long to me a home where I experienced much affection; and none can tell how painful to me are those political differences which divide you, the possible consequences of which I dread to contemplate. But your

interests are now peculiarly mine ; I shall stay where I am, and maintain them as best I can.'

'You make me half ashamed of my weakness, Julia,' said the Earl.

'No, no,' she quickly observed, 'it was your loving heart that spoke.'

De Clifford found himself obliged to depart the following morning, and had a great deal of business to transact in the intervening time. His chief concern was the state of the Castle ; and strict were the injunctions he gave to the captain, in consideration of the precious charge he left behind. Orders were given that no stranger be admitted without rigorous scrutiny ; that a constant watch was to be kept up day and night, that every means of defence was to be in readiness ; and when, on hearing of his return to England, a band was to be despatched to join him, the garrison was on no account to be diminished by a single man, till they should have further orders.

The hour arrived when De Clifford was to set out, and Julia was well-nigh overcome. Her husband endeavoured to appear cheerful, as he observed her spirits sinking.

'Julia,' he said, folding her in his arms, 'we have parted before under more adverse circumstances, yet we have been suffered to meet again. Let me remind you of what you said yesterday : such experience of the past should teach us to trust the future implicitly to the same loving and unerring Guide. To Him I commit you, who "stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind!"'¹

The wife's efforts to suppress her feelings were in vain, as she strove through her tears to utter, 'When, how am I to have tidings of you ?'

'Trust me,' he said tenderly ; 'you shall have tidings, —the earliest I can send ; and you will bear up nobly—I know you will.'

¹ Isa. xxvii. 8.

She saw that she was inflicting pain ; and, striving to be firm, she observed, ' It is not my part to unnerve you at the outset, when high and perhaps difficult duties lie before you ; but it is over now.'

They knelt together once more in prayer,—once more they parted.

De Clifford carried with him very few attendants. It was arranged that Blondel should meet him on the way, and accompany him ; while Swinderby remained in England to watch events.

When Julia found herself, in a manner, alone in Clifford Castle, she was oppressed with a sensation of desertion very painful to bear. For the first few days she could scarcely realize to herself that De Clifford was really gone away, and now and then she half expected him to enter the room, or fancied she heard his step approaching.

Two or three weeks had passed away, when rumours of direful import began to be whispered. These reports soon found their way to the ears of the watchful governor of Clifford Castle, and they troubled him not a little. He heartily wished the Earl back. The command of the Castle was a matter much to his taste, and its defence a work in which he would pride himself ; but in the prospect of actual danger, he wished the young Countess had been left in some other asylum. She appeared to him so totally unsuited to the position in which such a state of things would place her, that he wished he could now exchange her for the old lady, whose strong nerves would be likely to render her presence more desirable in cases of perplexity and turmoil. Harcourt waited a confirmation of the rumour before he should announce to Julia the threatened danger.

He had not to wait long. A messenger covered with dust, mounted on a steed bearing the marks of hard travel, galloped to the Castle gate, and after giving satisfactory proof of the legitimacy of his errand, was admitted to a

conference with the governor. After his departure, the captain had no hesitation that it became his duty to communicate to the Countess the object of his embassy. Harcourt was a man who had served some hard campaigns in the civil wars. He was much more of a soldier than a courtier; but he had a frank manliness about him which attracted Julia's regard, and she felt satisfied that he was worthy of the trust committed to him. He ascended the stair in much perplexity as to the manner in which he should convey to the Countess tidings that the north of England was in arms in favour of Edward of York.

'I am sorry, madam,' he said, as he entered the room, 'to be the bearer of unwelcome tidings.'

'Have you heard of the Earl?' inquired Julia, in evident alarm.

'No, no; I trust all is well there,' he quickly replied. 'But there is a great rising in the north, and it is said, pretty confidently, that Edward of York is among the rebels in person.'

'This is sad intelligence,' she replied; but taking the instant resolve, that on the first hint of danger her people should not discover that she entertained any personal apprehension, she added, 'We must be prepared, at all events, for the worst. I think the Earl spoke of an additional outlook, and double sentinels, in case of any occurrence of a threatening nature. But I need not tell you how to act; I know you will do all that is necessary. Lord de Clifford has implicit reliance on you.'

Harcourt was complimented, but still more was he astonished at the calm and dignified deportment of the young Countess.

'Your ladyship may depend upon my most zealous services,' he answered; 'but I fear our crackles of war¹ will make music that may please you but indifferently.'

¹ Note Q.

‘Do not consider me at such a crisis,’ she said. ‘I shall be best pleased by your bearing in remembrance that in the Earl’s absence I expect every one here to exert a double portion of vigilance. You shall not find me in any respect in your way. I do shrink from the dread prospect of sacrificing human life, and so, I am sure, would Lord de Clifford; but if, indeed, we be unavoidably put to the test, we must not let Clifford Castle pass tamely out of our hands. I beg you will communicate to me, without hesitation, whatever authentic news you hear.’

Harcourt returned to his post quite another man. He saw that he had misunderstood the character of the person he had to deal with, and he observed to his lieutenant that, for as gentle as she looked, the Countess had a spirit that would not discredit the De Cliffords. He proceeded to the superintendence of his charge, while Julia, who had made a successful effort to conceal her real trepidation, now shut herself up, to indulge the natural current of feeling, unobserved and unrestrained. It was some time before she was able to appear before her household with sufficient composure; but when she did come forth, the only difference they could see was an unusual measure of firm determination. Towards evening she summoned the governor, and told him she wished to survey the preparations he had been making.

‘I hope you are satisfied that my courage has not deserted me,’ she observed; ‘but it may satisfy your people to see me among them.’

Harcourt was delighted, and with alacrity led the way to every turret and battlement. Julia addressed a word of encouragement to the sentinel as she passed him on his post, and to the groups assembled in dispersed companies.

‘I have no doubt of your fidelity, my friends,’ she said. ‘It is our duty to make every preparation for defence; but I hope the danger that threatens us will pass away without

your being called to action. I wish you, however, to know that I am fully prepared for consequences.'

Her presence infused into every heart a deep feeling of devotedness, and the governor, with more sincerity than refinement, assured her his own hand would fling from the battlements the man that should refuse, at her bidding, to risk his life against a host. 'If Clifford Castle is taken in my master's absence,' he said, 'it shall be across my body that the enemy steps into it, and woe betide the foe that ventures the attack.'

While this enthusiasm was spreading among the garrison, the Countess retired from a scene so uncongenial, sick at heart. She shrank from the part she was called upon to act; her former experience had no counterpart to her present circumstances. But surely there was no case so difficult that there was no counsel to be found suited to it where she was wont to apply.

There was, in reality, great reason for alarm, for Edward the Fourth was successfully trying both stratagem and eloquence to enlist public sympathy on his behalf. His reception at the court of his brother-in-law, the Duke of Burgundy, had not been very flattering; and it was not to be supposed that he could be satisfied with so great a reverse of fortune. He landed in Yorkshire, and to stifle uneasy feelings, till he should obtain a footing, he put forth the flimsy pretext of a desire to recover only his patrimony. The people of the north were deceived by the apparent moderation of his demands, and his followers soon became so numerous that he was in a condition to avow his real intentions. He had anticipated the landing of Queen Margaret and the Prince of Wales, whose presence, together with the additional force they carried with them, would have been a very formidable addition to the opposition with which he had already to cope. Edward calculated on his brother, the Duke of Clarence, who only

waited an opportunity of going over to his side ; and the short respite which England had enjoyed was at an end.

On the intelligence of these movements reaching Sir Henry Pierrepont, he immediately resolved on proving his fidelity to the cause he had espoused. He lost no time in joining the army ; his followers were very acceptable, and he was himself received with flattering distinction.

The rival houses again took the field ; the Lancastrians at this time with manifest advantage, could they have counted securely on all who apparently leagued with them. The Duke of Clarence dissembled to the last moment, and those with whom he seemed to act were completely deceived. Notwithstanding that the Earl of Warwick had troops scattered up and down throughout the country, Edward was suffered to pass on to the metropolis without opposition. His expensive habits had in former days placed him deeply in debt to some of the citizens ; their only chance of being paid was his ultimate success. His popular manners had won over others to his interest ; so that, through love or fear, or some other motive, the way was paved for his favourable reception. The Lancastrians were now on the alert ; but a blow was struck, which all the energy of their leader could not retrieve. No accounts of Queen Margaret's arrival were received, when the Earl of Warwick resolved on fighting at Barnet, where his army was completely defeated, and where he himself was slain.

There remained no leader equal to him in all those qualities necessary to constitute a great general, — no single individual so universally popular, and with him expired all likelihood of success to the cause of Henry the Sixth. He should not have risked this battle before he was reinforced by the queen's troops ; but his jealousy of her interference was undiminished, and he was anxious to win the day without her aid. Union might have insured

success ; but their forces, like their feelings, were divided, and the loss of their cause was the consequence.¹

Sir Henry Pierrepont, like other fiery and spirited young men, was anxious to distinguish himself at this his first trial in arms. He succeeded in doing so ; but he carried away a painful memorial of the field of Barnet. A severe wound disabled him from accompanying the king to the celebration of his triumph ; he was much disappointed at not being able to proceed to London, and participate in the rejoicings ; but he was obliged to return to Pierrepont Manor to nurse his wound, and to miss his sister's care.

While these scenes were transacting in England, Margaret of Anjou was driven about on the sea by winds as adverse as her fortunes ; and no tidings of the absent had as yet reached Clifford Castle.

It was on the very day of the Earl of Warwick's defeat and death that the queen with her son landed at Weymouth. The news that awaited them was well calculated to spread dismay among their friends ; and Margaret, at the first, seemed to lose all her wonted presence of mind. On seeing her cause, however, espoused by a number of gentlemen who hastened to join her army, her courage revived, and she was easily persuaded to take those active steps to repair her loss, that were suited to her character.

¹ Note R.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THROUGHOUT these troubles, Clifford Castle remained without molestation; but in no degree was the rigid and watchful jealousy of its governor abated. The death of the Earl of Warwick, and the desertion of the Duke of Clarence, damped the spirit of the Lancastrian party; and although Queen Margaret had landed, and the Prince of Wales was ready in person to lead his partisans to the field, the prospect before them was little better than a forlorn hope. The weather had been very stormy, and Julia had waked many an anxious hour, listening to the wind as it whistled through the battlements; while in daylight she cast a frequent look at the heraldic weather-vane,¹ to ascertain how it pointed. Every messenger that arrived, she hoped might have tidings of De Clifford's landing; but as yet she had received none, when the news of the battle of Barnet found their way to her. The report, too, she heard was only general; she had no particular intelligence of her brother; and altogether, the harassing time she passed, required an apprenticeship in trials such as she had experienced to enable her to bear up under it. It was long since Julia had been learning the difficult lesson to trust, where she could not trace, the hand that led her through the wilderness. She now required it all; she required

¹ Note E.

more, for a murmuring spirit threw in suggestions which disturbed her peace; and as her distresses increased in number and magnitude, thoughts arose that her devotional spirit would be more advantaged by her being permitted to enjoy the earthly repose so congenial to her taste. Thus does the tempter always take advantage of times of trial and of weakness; and those who are ignorant of his devices are thereby often driven from their stronghold. But Julia knew where to go for armour to shield her against those fiery darts.

She was aware that Swinderby was on the watch for the expected ships, and would convey to her the earliest intelligence he could gather. Swinderby was not yet known at the Castle by his real name; but his appearance was familiar, and he was recognised by the appellation of Williams, being a very slight departure from his Christian name. It was the Earl's express command that Williams should be admitted at all times unquestioned; and Julia, with the deepest anxiety, was daily, hourly, wishing for his appearance.

A few days after the battle of Barnet, a messenger halted at the outer gate of the Castle, and demanded entrance. The sentinel refused to admit him.

'You surely know me,' pleaded the courier.

'Perhaps I do,' answered the guard; 'but I am not to acknowledge it at present.'

'I have a letter for the Countess,' urged the man.

'I cannot admit you,' was the laconic answer.

'I wonder you can be so ridiculous, Sam,' said the familiar messenger. 'It's a rare thing for Sir Henry Pierrepont's servant to be kept here begging for entrance with his master's letter.'

'But it's no new thing for the Lord de Clifford's men to keep a Yorkist at arm's length; so I tell you you're much too near my cross-bow as it is.'

Just as the parley had reached this point, Harcourt looked over a bartizan; and shouting in a stentorian voice, desired to know who was there.

‘A letter for my lady,’ readily replied the messenger.

‘One of Sir Henry Pierrepoint’s men, sir,’ explained the sentry.

‘There’s no admission here for the white rose, root or branch, leaf or thorn, bud, blossom, or slip,’ cried the governor. ‘Give your message to the sentry, and be gone instantly.’

‘But I want an answer,’ said the persevering post.

‘We’ll send one, if there should happen to be any,’ replied Harcourt, dryly; ‘we have plenty of hands to spare.’

Very unwilling to carry an account of his uncouth reception to his master, but feeling at the same time that the governor must be obeyed, the man gave the letter to his old acquaintance, who had now become the grim guardian of the outer gate, and departed, not a little crestfallen, while Harcourt despatched a page to receive it, and deliver it to his mistress.

Elated as Henry had been with the victory, his thoughts reverted with sadness to his sister. She was now so situated that he could neither offer her service nor protection; and it seemed to him that her singularly fated history was about to be closed tragically. He made an effort to write a few lines. They went to express his anxiety on her account; and to say, that although now he could not so much as see her, he hoped she would remember that, in the event of circumstances to which he would and could give no specific name, there was a home that was ever made glad by her presence. His heart was full as he wrote; he conveyed into his short note more tenderness than he would at any time have suffered to escape his lips in a year’s intercourse with his sister; and he made light of his wound.

This letter was not long unanswered, and Harcourt was put to the test of sending it to Pierrepont Manor by one of those supernumerary hands, of whom he so loudly boasted, with strict commands not to tarry there a single moment.

Julia assumed a tone of confidence she scarcely felt, in her answer. But this had now become habitual, in the hourly necessity for wearing a manner that might prevent her people from imagining that her thoughts were clouding, or her courage had departed. She begged of her brother to be under no apprehensions on her account, as she found daily strength for daily trial, and had no doubt it should continue in time to come. His affectionate remembrance she prized, as it deserved, and was comforted to learn that his injury was not of a serious nature.

Soon after despatching this note, Julia thought she heard the tramp of a horse. It was too dark to see outward objects, and she listened with breathless anxiety. Some one was evidently admitted—could it be? but she had scarcely time to hazard a conjecture before a servant announced Mr. Williams.

Next to the Earl's own arrival, his was the most agreeable; because she did not doubt he was the bearer of tidings of or from him. She had need of an opportunity of unbending, and at the sight of her old friend she first clasped her hands together, then stretching out one to Swinderby, she exclaimed, with half choked utterance, 'Oh! how I have longed for intelligence!—these dismal, dismal times!'

'There is One who rideth on the whirlwind, and maketh the clouds his pavilion!' said Swinderby, as he instantly drew out a packet and placed it in her hands; it was from the Clifford. Yet, as Julia read the address, and proceeded to open it, the time seemed too long to wait; and she hastily said—

‘Where is he? tell me, did you see him?’

‘I saw the Earl, madam,’ replied the messenger; but she was now deeply engaged with her letter.

After a protracted and stormy passage, he had, with the royal party, landed at Weymouth. He had fondly hoped to have been his own first messenger home; but the disastrous news that met them on their arrival, had rendered it imperative on him to remain with the prince. He could not at such a time abandon him; and the queen, with all her wonted firmness, never before seemed so dependent for counsel. But a few days, and the fate of England must be decided. De Clifford indulged in no sanguine expectations of success, but declared his assured belief in the unerring disposal of Sovereign wisdom.

Swinderby was also the bearer of a letter for the governor, desiring the immediate despatch of the retainers that were held in readiness; but with reiterated orders, not to weaken the garrison. When the Countess had perused her letter, she said, ‘And you have orders for Harcourt too; symptoms of preparation for another battle—the last. Oh, Mr. Swinderby, these times are sad indeed; how happy they are whose days may pass in peace!’

‘Yes, truly,’ he answered; ‘but, sweet and desirable as peaceful times are, the outward peace can never be comparable with the peace that dwells within. A heart may be torn while all seems enjoyment around; and a heart may rest in quiet while trouble reigns without. When the waves beat violently into the ship on the sea of Galilee, He who could still them was asleep; but He was awake to action by the cries of his timid disciples. He sleeps not now; and think you He hears not the prayers of his people? Think you, although He tries them in the furnace, He will not deliver them out of it, when they are purified from the dross? Have you not felt it? have you not told me how these assurances were realized to you under circumstances

of deep trial, when you were made the instrument of my deliverance from a servitude, the remembrance of which humbles me to the dust? Oh! Lady de Clifford,' he continued, almost overcome by his emotions, 'to you, as to myself, I would say, remember whose word it is: "Be not faithless, but believing."'

'Oh! my friend, I have been harassed with temptations,' she said. 'Was there ever any one so situated?'

'I know not,' answered Swinderby; 'perhaps not, in all respects, but the portion of others would not suit you more than yours would suit them. You had lately a time of worldly peace and prosperity: did it quicken your pace heavenward?'

'I was very happy then,' she said.

'So happy, I suppose,' observed Swinderby, 'that you could have owned this world a desirable home, did the stream of life continue to run its course thus smoothly for ever.'

'You act the part of a faithful friend,' said Julia. 'I see the force of your appeal, and I confess my need of it. I could scarcely have suspected the lurking danger of making shipwreck of my faith in the quiet haven of domestic happiness; but you show me the startling possibility.'

'I am satisfied you shall not be left to do so,' he responded. 'My heart enters deeply into your sorrows; but unto whom much is given, of such more shall be required. Much certainly it is to be called out of the gross darkness that surrounds us, into the marvellous light; and it is no small difference that ought to mark the distinction from those who are less privileged.'

'Dreadful as were the days passed at Lambeth,' observed Julia, 'I enjoyed more composure of spirit then, and was less haunted by fear than I am now.'

'I can easily believe that,' said Swinderby; 'although you are entirely in the path of duty now, there is a greater

mingling of earthliness in your trials, your hopes, your fears, your wishes; but cast your cares unreservedly on Him who careth for you, and who appointeth them one and all, and your way shall be made plain.'

'I am ashamed of my despondency,' she said; 'I, who have expressed to others my expectation of receiving such support as I now require. I do not think I did so in hypocrisy; no, I sincerely believed it; after having proved it so often before, in my own experience, how could I do otherwise? Yet I am self-condemned for unpardonable faint-heartedness.'

'I think, my dear friend, you have been unwittingly paving the way for disappointment to yourself in more ways than one,' observed Swinderby. 'You have, perhaps, been building too much on that which you have already received; practically forgetting that yesterday's strength is insufficient for the necessities of to-day. We must be begging, and waiting, and watching, while we dwell in tabernacles of clay. Then, may I not further hint that, like many besides, you too may have begun to forget that trouble is a part of the Christian's inheritance? The cross must in some form be borne from stage to stage, and if we belong to the little flock, we have in reality more cause to wonder when we are out of trouble than when we are in it.'

'You have spoken truly,' she said. 'But I believe you will not suspect me of being much engrossed with the fear of such losses as might, with some, weigh heavily. For years past, I may say, it has been my endeavour to sit loose to the honours and luxuries of life; but there is one thing that I ever shrink from—I cannot give it a name. How looked the Earl?'

'He was well, but bore marks of deep anxiety,' replied Swinderby, 'as cannot be matter of wonder. Part of that I hope to remove on my return to him, which will be with

the band that, as I suppose, leaves this about midnight for the place of rendezvous; and I, uncongenial to my heart as are the sights and sounds of war, I shall not be out of reach of my noble friend, till I know what is to become of him.'

There was a firmness in Swinderby's tone and manner that served to arouse the drooping spirits of the Countess; and there was a warmth and an energy in his devotion that invigorated hers. 'I will endeavour to do my duty,' she said; 'and you shall retire to take what rest you may, while I prepare a letter for you to carry. But I should like to know more particularly how Lord de Clifford seems impressed by the posture of affairs.'

'He appeared to me to maintain his usual self-possession,' replied Swinderby. 'One thing I know,—he feels acutely the dire necessity for further hostilities. This, his principles must render painful; but there seems to exist no human possibility of escaping it; and I should say his character shines brightest in trying times.'

'Then of these he has had enough,' observed Julia.

'Nay—not enough,' said Swinderby gravely,—'not enough till He who measures the needful portion sees the end answered. Tried, however sorely we may be, there is support in store. And shall we fear, though the mountains themselves be removed? shall we faint under tribulation, while his arm sustains us, who balances the universe? Dear Lady de Clifford, I am sure you are willing to do or to suffer according to the good pleasure of Him who doth all things well, though momentary depression may induce an expression that savours of the contrary.'

'Alas!' said Julia, 'I have a very hard and unbelieving heart, notwithstanding the goodness and mercy that have followed me hitherto. I have ever felt suspense the hardest of all things to endure; therefore it is that I am yet to be more exercised in this way. But to return to my subject.

I do not think the Earl can believe it possible that the cause of the prince shall be successful.'

'He knows,' answered Swinderby, 'that the battle is not always to the strong; and he believes the result will be for the accomplishment of the best ends. He is now diligently occupied in promoting the interest of Prince Edward; but his chief anxiety was about you. He knew not what counsel he could convey to your ladyship in case of emergency. His last charge to me was to impress on your mind his earnest wish that you should consult your own safety without reference to anything else, as occasion might suggest. Should it come to the worst, your brother's interest may avail you something. In case of defeat—in case of —; I have been shunning this point,' he continued, after some hesitation; 'but should the Earl survive—'

Julia had placed her elbow on the table, and was concealing her face with her handkerchief.

'I have been too plain,' he said.

'Go on, I am prepared for whatever you may say,' she faltered, and Swinderby resumed.

'He cannot live in England, and I see no prospect for him but to return to the scene of his former wanderings, when he was alone.'

'And what then?' inquired Julia, taking her handkerchief from her eyes, and looking in Swinderby's face, for he had difficulty in proceeding.

'I am sure you draw the inference,' he replied. 'The Earl's own circumstances seem light to him; yours, madam, are not so. In England you might, alas! have snares and dangers; but you are totally unacquainted with the hardships attending such an exile as he contemplates.'

'Mr. Swinderby,' she said, with a composure for which he was not prepared, 'should you again see Lord de Clifford under the influence of despondency on my

account, tell him that my resolution is taken, and that I say to him, as Ruth said to Naomi, "Whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people." Clifford Castle was a pleasant home when he was in it: the cot on the mountain-side shall, with him, be as welcome to me. Tell him that all is well here,—as yet no one has disturbed our peace; and, much as I long for his presence, I would not, on any consideration, wish him to forsake for a moment the path of honourable duty, more especially when so dark a cloud rests upon the cause.'

After a short pause, Swinderby said, 'May I ask if you have had any tidings of Sir Henry Pierrepont?'

'My brother,' she answered, 'has just sent me a letter. He is suffering from a wound he received at fatal Barnet; and should another engagement take place shortly, that will have one effect in which I can trace mercy—he shall not meet my husband an enemy in a hostile army.'

At that moment it was announced that in three hours the band would be ready to depart, and Julia besought Swinderby to seek a short repose. There could be little rest in the Castle, for the clatter of arms, with the hurried noise of heavy footsteps, were incessant. Julia, meantime, prepared her despatches, and, having sealed them, waited the appointed hour.

Punctual to the time, Harcourt came in person to say that the men were at the gate; and immediately after, Swinderby appeared. The governor left them, and the Countess, placing her packet in the hands of her faithful messenger, said firmly—

'I have here stated all I had to say. I am going with you to see the people, and to deliver them the banner. I shall then return, to wait as patiently as I can the tidings that may come.'

She descended the stair, followed by Swinderby. The

gallant company was in waiting; and when their lady delivered into the hands of him who was to carry it, the family colour, each man felt that he was personally engaged to defend it to the last.

As the royal party had reared the shores of England, tired by the discomforts of a tempestuous voyage, they little anticipated the news that awaited them. The Earl de Clifford had intended to proceed immediately home, to ascertain the welfare of his household, and to lead his retainers in person to the standard of the prince; but the clouds which obscured the prospects of the cause, cast their dark shadows also on his domestic plans. He could not brook delay in learning how it fared at Clifford Castle. He found that his going there personally was out of the question; a very large party had seceded to the enemy, and each individual's conduct would now be watched with jealousy. Even if he should for a few days absent himself, he was sure no suspicion of his fidelity would for a moment find place in the breast of the prince; but the example might be infectious, and the lukewarm and the wavering might return no more. His mind was harassed with thoughts of home, and he resolved on sending Blondel express, at all risks, to learn the position of affairs at the Castle, that on his return he might be able to judge exactly where his duty lay.

While the Earl was perplexed with these anxieties, Swinderby was on his way to the camp. He arrived time enough to supersede Blondel in his commission, and proceeded to the Castle, as has been already narrated. This arrangement was peculiarly agreeable to De Clifford. He was quite relieved when his messenger had set off. It became daily more improbable that he should see again either Julia or Clifford Castle, till mighty events were brought about.

Many gentlemen now began to flock to the standard of

the queen; the number of her army became encouraging; prospects seemed to brighten; spirits that had been depressed became elevated, and hopes were entertained of effecting a union with the Earl of Pembroke in Wales, when the united forces would have made a very formidable opposition.

They had, however, a wily enemy to deal with, who watched their manœuvres, and with keen-sightedness conjectured their intentions, so that, by well concerted plans and prompt execution, they were foiled when on the very point of accomplishing their design; and the battle of Tewkesbury sealed the fate of Henry the Sixth, his queen, and the noble young prince, who was there barbarously murdered.

Having thus briefly disposed of these historical particulars, we now return to the narrative, and the fate of De Clifford, whom we left in a situation of danger, whence he was little likely to emerge unscathed.

CHAPTER XXV.

T was the beauteous month of May when the battle of Tewkesbury was fought ; and a sad contrast to the lovely scenery on the banks of the Severn was the contest that human passions that day called into action. This thought occurred to William Swinderby, as, from a neighbouring height, he anxiously watched the movements of the troops. Blondel was also hovering near, and towards nightfall they both met at a preconcerted spot. Long before the day had closed, they were aware that the Lancastrians had been defeated, and now the question was, what was best for them to do? Should one of them carry the heavy tidings to Clifford Castle, or should they delay until the personal fate of Lord de Clifford was ascertained? Blondel, who had been nearest to the scene of conflict, had watched every movement of the colour which denoted the position of the Earl and his followers, and was sure that it had only been borne down at the time the Prince of Wales had been taken prisoner. He ventured to question one or two stragglers if they knew anything of the Earl de Clifford's fate, but he gathered no information, till, encountering one of the Earl's own vassals in his flight from the scene of carnage, he learned from him that his master had fallen in the thickest of the fight. On communicating this information to Swinderby, it was resolved that they should visit the

fatal field together, when the moon arose, and leave no effort untried to ascertain beyond a doubt the fate of the Earl.

The night was serene and cloudless ; there was sufficient light to disclose to these two wanderers on the battle-field the most dismal sight they ever beheld. The slaughtered lay in heaps on every side, while the groans of those who had not yet departed, fell painfully on the ears of those who could afford them no relief. Here and there requests were reiterated with which they could not comply ; and their compassionate Christian hearts bled as they passed by, on the right and on the left, those whose only request was a little water. Guided by the observations he had made before, Blondel discovered the place where he had last seen the banner of the De Cliffords waving, and found the emblems which distinguished the retainers thickly scattered around.

‘Hereabouts he lies if on the field of Tewkesbury,’ said Blondel ; ‘and I trust we may at least have the poor satisfaction of discovering all that now remains of him who possessed a nobler and a braver nature than can be theirs who may henceforth asperse his motives, or calumniate his memory. Hark ! there is a faint sound from that heap of the dead.’

‘I heard nothing that I could recognise,’ sighed Swin-derby. ‘Moans and grievous expressions of suffering are rife around us, and I fear our search is fruitless. To die on the battle-field was the pride of his race ; I would his fate had not been such, who walked so sweetly in the paths of peace.’

Blondel’s affection for Lord de Clifford was strong as the gratitude he owed him.

‘I cannot—will not leave this spot yet,’ he said.

‘I ask you not, my brother,’ replied Swin-derby mournfully. ‘I, too, desire to remain here while there is a ray of hope.’

'My master, my dear, my fated master!' cried Blondel in an agony; and, giving way to his emotions, he became incapable of the investigations he had so much at heart. It was now Swinderby's turn to be the listener, and grasping his companion's arm, he said—

'Hush! I did think I heard a faint moan yonder. I fancied the voice was familiar; help me to remove this stiffened corpse.'

Blondel was in an instant recalled to activity and usefulness, and the impediment was soon out of the way. They could now discern a slight movement, but on stooping down to examine, they were disappointed to find no signs of life in the form before them. They were soon, however, satisfied that it was not De Clifford's; they removed it also, and immediately a simultaneous expression of pleasure broke from them, for, covered as he was with dust and blood, there were sufficient indications in the dress to prove that the prize they had so eagerly sought was found. There was a moment of suspense, for they were not sure if they looked upon the dead or the living; and Swinderby was about to place his hand over the heart, when the Earl, relieved from the load which had pressed him down, began to exhibit signs of life. Swinderby undid the clasp of his helmet, and gently placing the sufferer's head on one of his arms, lifted the other devoutly in the act of thanksgiving. Blondel knelt on the other side, and exclaimed, 'Oh that I once heard his voice!'

'Tis mercy,' said De Clifford faintly, 'I know you both. Could I but—but be moved a little.'

Blondel started to his feet, and, looking round, he saw a horse, whose rider most probably had been slain; he seized him by the bridle, and, stripping off his mantle, folded it to make a sort of defence against the hardness of the war-saddle; he then motioned to Swinderby to assist him in

placing the Earl on it as softly as possible. De Clifford again made an effort to speak.

'Only bear me a little apart from this dread scene, that I may breathe my last in peace,' he said. 'I shall not long need a care that none can now with safety to themselves bestow upon me.'

'My lord, if you please, you will not try to talk,' said Swinderby; 'trust to us for the present.'

Then directing Blondel how to lift their burden in the easiest manner, they placed him across the animal, and led him to the side of a brook, the waters of which were not polluted by the blood that stained the Severn.

Here they paused to refresh the wounded man with a draught of the pure stream; but the nights were short, and they could not risk a long delay, for their object was to gain a place of concealment. The wandering life which necessity caused them to lead had made the features of the country and its places of hiding familiar. There was a cavern in the Malvern Hills to which they had sometimes resorted, and they knew a mountain path, far from ordinary thoroughfares, that led to it. Could they but transport their charge thither, they were quite sure of safety from all pursuit. Resolved to be baffled by nothing short of impossibility, they turned into a by-way. Swinderby had covered the Earl from view with his own plain upper garb, while he, rendered still more incapable of speech by motion, was entirely passive, and suffered his guides to carry him whither they would. They journeyed on in almost total silence, making an occasional pause to observe if their friend still lived.

When informed that they had reached their place of destination, the Earl said that he was quite satisfied they would do what seemed best.

'I am entirely in your hands,' he observed, 'unable to assist myself in any way.'

'The best thing you can do for yourself and those who love you,' said Swinderby, 'is to refrain from agitating yourself;' and lifting him from the horse, they carried him into the cavern.

A rock stood before it, which entirely concealed the existence of an aperture, and the entrance was covered by a quantity of tangled creepers. These easily yielded to the experienced hand that put their branches aside, and fell again on the passage being effected, forming a natural curtain. The entrance was narrow, but the space soon widened considerably, and was partially lighted by one or two almost imperceptible fissures in the rock. A bed of dried fern was ready in one corner, and there the weary and exhausted sufferer was laid.

'I am sorry my accommodations are not more suitable to the quality of my guest,' said Swinderby; 'but they have one recommendation that a more comfortable place might lack. This retreat is perfectly secure; and if it should by any means be discovered that your lordship survived the conflict, while you remain here pursuit will be in vain.'

'The cause is lost,' said De Clifford. 'I did what I could to save the prince; it was in endeavouring to keep him from being made prisoner that I received these injuries.'

When excitement had in some measure subsided, and the Earl had been for a while stretched upon his rustic couch, his situation seemed to rush upon his mind with overwhelming force. He made a fruitless attempt to place himself erect, but immediately fell back.

'Swinderby,' he said, 'you have, at no small risk and labour, conveyed a frail and broken tenement here, from which the living principle must shortly depart; you will now listen to the request of a dying man.'

'Your wounds are serious, my lord,' replied his friend;

‘yet I have great hopes of your recovery; but in life or in death it is my desire to serve you. What would you have me to do?’

‘Should I recover,’ he resumed, ‘I need not tell you of the prospect before me; no doubt remains of confiscation and ruin; but I do not expect to live. You must at once advert to the chief cause of my anxiety,—what is to become of my wife?’

‘Has the Master she serves no power to protect her?’ asked Swinderby solemnly.

‘He has, He has,’ quickly repeated the Earl; ‘but, my friend; we look not now for miracles, and nearly as soon may I look for clemency at the hand of the conqueror. I beseech you to hasten to Clifford Castle, and tell Lady de Clifford it is my earnest request that she expose herself to no further danger; no shadow of hope remains for the cause in which I hazarded so much, and I would not she should be mixed up in any way that can possibly be avoided, with transactions that may serve to exasperate the Yorkist. He knows no pity in his anger; to bear my name will be crime enough, and she is in need of counsel at this critical juncture.’

‘And what is the plan you would suggest for her ladyship to follow?’ inquired Swinderby.

De Clifford knit his brow, in the effort of thought, but his brain refused its wonted office of disentangling difficulties. A succession of distorted ideas passed wildly through his mind, in which the transactions of the previous day were mingled with undefined images of danger surrounding his beloved Julia. Pierrepoint Manor, too, in its quiet loveliness, came to his thoughts, and immediately after, its master’s political position. It was confusion all; he turned a perplexed gaze on his listener, as he uttered—

‘My mother is distant, and it is no place for Julia; her brother is a Yorkist,—I am unable to collect my thoughts

into anything like form,—and yet, surely, Henry Pierrepont, the frank, the affectionate, will remember that the wife of De Clifford, outlaw though he may be now, is his own only sister. Were I assured of her safety, how light should every other concern appear! I have too rashly followed the dictates of my own will; I should not have involved her in this ruin.'

'You could not foresee events, my dear friend,' said Swinderby soothingly. 'Reserve your self-accusation for a more fitting subject. I am sure you have nothing to reproach yourself with in the matter to which you allude; and were it not that large allowances must be made for you at such a moment, I own it would astonish me to hear you talk as if the particular arrangements of your lot were in your own hands. You must try to compose yourself, my lord. I shall proceed to Clifford Castle, and endeavour to fulfil your wishes without further explanation. Blondel knows the localities hereabouts as well as I do; he will provide whatever may be necessary till I return. I cannot be seen emerging from this defile in daylight; but when night sets in, I shall commence my journey.'

'Thanks, thanks,' said the Earl; 'that will comfort me. Oh, could I but hear of her!'

'We shall commit ourselves, and those we love, into his hands, whose guardianship is complete security,' said Swinderby; 'and I cannot take the responsibility of encouraging you to talk more at present, as I am sure that an accession of fever would be the inevitable consequence.'

Blondel had gone, by a circuitous way, to procure some necessaries. It was evening before he returned; and Swinderby, after having instructed him how to treat the patient in his absence, left them, sad to be the bearer of such melancholy tidings to one in whom he was so peculiarly interested, and doubtful how to execute the difficult com-

mission he had undertaken ; but rumour might possibly have carried even worse reports than his before him—it was most probable.

Long before Swinderby could have reached the Castle, several of the discomfited members of De Clifford's band had arrived, bearing with them accounts of the most disastrous kind. The worst Harcourt would fain have concealed from the Countess, with the latent hope that they might prove false ; but his caution was of little avail, for, with the proverbial speed of bad news, the report of De Clifford's death reached the ears of his wife. She was at first overcome by a sensation of stupor, and she could not realize at once the extent of her own desolation. The roughest of the soldiers who garrisoned the Castle seemed to sympathise in her woe ; for the warder's tread became softer, and the shout of warning or surprise died away into so faint a sound that the walls no longer echoed them. The Castle hardly appeared to be inhabited, all was so still, but for the appearance of armed figures, who paced the courts and battlements. Harcourt furled the flag, and the bare pole stood up in melancholy solitude, while the weather vane, no longer an object of anxious regard, creaked idly in the summer breeze.¹

A day and a night passed over her, before Julia became sufficiently collected to act. But it was not permitted her to remain longer in that sacred and coveted solitude, which her bereaved heart required in the time, as she thought it, of her early widowhood. Clifford Castle was no longer hers. Her brother-in-law had no quarrel with Edward iv., and it was right he should judge for himself what course was now best to be pursued.

Nothing new occurred in the short period of her entire seclusion from her household, except the continued arrival of stragglers, all bearing the same woful intelligence, with

¹ Note S.

the details of the day varied according to the impression individually made upon their minds.

With the hope of hearing some contradiction to the report of his master's death, Harcourt listened to a variety of narrations, and was in the act of hearing the tale of the last comer, when he received a message from the Countess, desiring to see him. He rather dreaded the interview; for if she wished for information, he had none to give that was not of the most gloomy description. He found her pale from weeping and want of sleep; and when, in compliance with her desire, he seated himself, he fetched a sigh of such intense sympathy, that she was so affected by it as to be unable for some time to speak. Had it been an hour, Harcourt would not have ventured to break the silence; but she found courage at length to enter on the business she wished to transact.

'Harcourt,' she said, 'I believe there will be no further need for the sort of service our people have so willingly rendered; and I think it would be wrong to expose them to unnecessary hazard. I have no desire to give any orders here, except for the welfare of the family, to whose interest for the sake of—' Here she paused, unable to proceed; but changing the form of her expression a little, she added, 'to whose interest I am indissolubly bound.'

'I shall take no orders from any one else, madam,' observed the governor, 'till—till I have more authentic accounts.'

Julia shook her head mournfully. 'I was going to suggest,' she resumed, 'that the vassals should be distinctly told to make no hostile demonstrations of any kind, and that our defence here should wear as little as possible of a threatening aspect.'

'I understand,' answered Harcourt, as he cast a look at the red rose which he wore; 'this badge need not obtrude on the gazer.'

'It is red indeed,' said Julia; 'a darker hue would beseem us now! I wish to have a messenger despatched to Ravenham. The Countess and my brother-in-law will make what arrangements they think proper. I do not feel that I can do anything more.'

'If our people imagined that you had any intention of leaving us, madam,' insinuated the governor, 'they would become quite dispirited. I could have no confidence in them, and I hardly think I should be able to keep them about me.'

'I entertain no thoughts of doing so at present,' she said. 'I am quite unequal to seeing them now; but you will tell them from me, that I am very sensible of their attachment and fidelity, and that I am quite satisfied to remain under their guardianship.'

Harcourt had conveyed no new intelligence to Julia; yet one expression which he had dropped, had laid a strong hold on her mind; it was the slight ray of hope springing out of his refusal to believe the extent of their loss without better confirmation. She was surprised that no tidings had reached her through Swinderby, and thus she was driven by conjecture, till, no longer able to hold out, she was persuaded by a faithful attendant, who had been with her ever since the abjuration of Rachel Brackenbury, to try and procure some repose.

When Swinderby arrived at the Castle, the downcast governor met him at the gate, with that anxiety for intelligence that had already induced him to listen to so many details; but Swinderby's information was for no ear, till first he had seen Lady de Clifford.

'You bring us but dismal news, I fear,' observed Harcourt; 'and you find a joyless house here.'

'There is little joy in the times,' replied Swinderby; 'and you have cause enough for sadness.'

'Alas!' sighed the governor, 'I see you bring us no

comfort. I sent you away with as brave a band as England could furnish; and they and you come back to us like the weeds which the ocean scatters on the shore. Where tarried you when Lord de Clifford fell?’

‘Not very distant,’ he replied. ‘The sun has shone this day on many a manly and noble head, laid low on the field of Tewkesbury; and the executioner’s axe awaits many more. I am oppressed by the sights of sorrow I have seen, and the sounds of it I have heard; and wearied and worn besides. I pray you question me no further; I must see the Countess.’

‘Our noble lady is in the deepest woe,’ said Harcourt, ‘and I know not if she can see any one; but I shall send you her waiting-woman, and you may inquire of her.’

From the girl Swinderby learned that, for the first time since accounts of the Earl’s death had arrived, her mistress had fallen asleep, and that nothing would induce her to enter her chamber for the present.

‘It would grieve me to disturb her,’ he said. ‘I myself shall be glad of some repose, and when her ladyship awakes you will tell her that I am here, and bring me her commands.’

Swinderby wished to be left to himself unquestioned, for he was resolved that the fact of Lord de Clifford’s survival should not escape his lips, except to his wife, and it was little imagined that Clifford Castle contained the bearer of such unlooked-for tidings. Solitude was most congenial to his feelings; he was now past his prime, and had the appearance of premature old age. The abstemious habits of his past life enabled him to do with little rest; but fatigues of mind and body had their effects on his constitution.

Not one of the garrison except Harcourt had any doubts of their master’s death; and he only tried to discredit it, from his strong aversion to believe it. Julia

had fallen into a feverish and broken slumber, troubled with dreams, uneasy and restless; but, after a time, her sleep became deep and calm, such as exhausted nature requires. Her patient and anxious attendant sat in an adjoining room with the communicating door partially open, jealous of every sound that might break the rest of her mistress. Some hours passed in this manner; and so profound had the latter time of her rest been, that on opening her eyes she was for a moment unconscious of her own circumstances. It was but for a moment, and then she became fully alive to all their sorrowful realities. Her maid was aroused by hearing a burst of grief issuing from the apartment, and covering her own face with her hands, she wept in silent sympathy, till the Countess called her by her name.

‘What is the hour, Beatrice?’ she inquired, as the girl stood before her.

‘Six o’clock, madam.’

‘So late!’ she said. ‘Has anything occurred at the Castle—any new arrivals?’

‘Yes, my lady,’ she answered cautiously; ‘there is a person who now waits to see your ladyship, when convenient.’

‘To see me!’ repeated the Countess, sitting up in the expectation of she knew not what.

‘Mr. Williams, madam,’ explained Beatrice.

‘Why did you not come to me at once?’ said the Countess.

‘He did not wish you to be disturbed, madam,’ replied the girl; ‘and, indeed, I would not have undertaken to awake you for the world.’

‘It was kindly meant,’ said her mistress; ‘and I dare say he thinks his story will reach me soon enough. But I must see him immediately.’

Julia had been hourly expecting Swinderby. But now

that he was really come, she almost shrank from the confirmation of those tidings, the truth of which, alas! she saw no grounds to question. He was soon in attendance.

'You have been long enough in the Castle,' she said, addressing him, as he silently seated himself, 'to be aware that the sad news from Tewkesbury arrived before you.'

'I have not had much intercourse with your people, madam, since I came hither,' he observed. He feared the consequences of too abruptly revealing the truth; his news were cheering in the point most at the heart of the listener, but she seemed to him unequal to any kind of excitement.

'I thought you might have some particle of consolation for me,' she resumed; 'it will be very small if I welcome it not. You can, perhaps, tell me where he lies, and how?'

'My dear lady,' answered Swinderby, 'I have such information for you as you do not expect. I am the bearer of a message from Lord de Clifford.'

'The last,' she remarked, with a deep sigh.

'I trust not the last neither,' replied Swinderby. 'The Earl survived the engagement; and, though materially injured, is now, I trust, in a place of safety.'

Julia regarded him for a moment with a sort of fixed look, while her countenance became more like marble than before. Swinderby feared the consequences; for he knew full well that sudden joy, as well as grief, might have fatal effects. He paused to suffer her to recover herself, but seeing she uttered not a word, he said—

'It has been my lot to see you under a variety of circumstances that have not, I believe, many parallels, even in these trying times. I have seen you endure sorrow with Christian meekness; I now bear you tidings of joy, but tidings which may demand of you sacrifices such as

you never were called upon to make before—your husband lives.'

Julia's heart responded to the appeal. Swinderby had touched the right chord; she was aroused at once; and folded her hands devoutly, as she uttered, 'He lives!' Then quickly added, 'And what sacrifice, think you, is there that I am not prepared to make on his account?'

'He is most unhappy about you,' observed the messenger; 'and his desire is, that you consider your own safety in the first place. He beseeches you, by all means, to avoid any course that might further involve you in the guilt of his hostility to the interest now likely to reign in England with undisputed sway.'

'And think you,' she said, 'that I shall in any way, by word or deed, separate my interest from his? Can Lord de Clifford think thus?'

'It was difficult in his case to think or judge deliberately,' answered her friend. 'I deliver my message, I make no comment. I may not conceal from you that the Earl is seriously wounded; but, I think, not hopelessly. He is himself of a different opinion; and when he spoke of you, I believe it was in reference to his own speedy removal. For my part, I have a confident expectation of his recovery; and I fully believe that it was in the sincerity of your heart you spoke the words of Ruth in reference to such a result as now seems about to test your firmness. It is believed that Lord de Clifford died on the field of Tewkesbury; it is of much importance that his escape be kept secret.'

'And how, or by whom, was he rescued?' she asked.

'Blondel and myself found him among the dead,' replied Swinderby, making as light as possible of his services.

But Julia could not be satisfied without a minute detail. When her informant had told her how he had left the sufferer at Malvern, he assured her that no human being

besides, except herself and Blondel, were aware either of the place of his concealment, or of his survival.

'Right, right!' repeated Julia. 'I shall go with you to Malvern.'

'To Malvern!' he repeated. 'I expect much from you, but not this. You cannot go to Malvern, it is no place for you; but I trust Lord de Clifford may soon recover sufficiently to be removed in disguise to some place of greater comfort, where you can join him; and after that, whether in England or elsewhere, I mistake you much if aught but death do part you more.'

'Mr. Swinderby,' she resumed, in a decided manner, 'I will go to Malvern. Nothing shall detain me here while I have the ability to leave it. You will, if you please, make no remonstrance, for my mind is made up on the subject.'

'But, dear Lady de Clifford, I have not told you,' observed Swinderby, 'that our place of temporary refuge contains nothing save dried fern for a couch, and other furnishings there are none.'

'Sad, indeed, for the sufferer!' she remarked. 'We shall carry some trifles, though trifles they must be, as we shall travel.'

'You could never stand it,' remonstrated Swinderby; 'and I believe such a step would distress the Earl beyond measure.'

'He may, perhaps, bear the distress of seeing me,' she answered. 'Is Malvern more distant from this than Pierrepont Manor from Lambeth?'

'Not so distant, by the way I travelled,' he replied, with a full understanding of her allusion. His mind reverted to that important journey, and he felt instantly satisfied that she had courage enough for that which she was about to undertake. But one thing he much feared—that her presence might be the means of discovering the Earl's abode,

and this he immediately suggested ; he said, the very fact of her leaving the Castle in such a manner might arouse suspicion.

‘ I am quite sensible of the difficulty,’ she said ; ‘ but I will see him if he lives ; and, if he is indeed called hence, should the wretched corner where the spirit departs be found out, he shall then be beyond the reach of persecution. If he lives, as you give me hopes he may ;—but I shall not talk of this now ; I have no need to harrow up my feelings. Harcourt must be made acquainted with the fact of the Earl’s survival, that he may know how to act. He will be comforted to know that he still keeps the Castle on behalf of the master to whom he shows such devoted attachment. He will make judicious use of the information, and these old walls will betray the secret as soon.’

Julia seemed at once capable of making every necessary arrangement ; and telling Swinderby she would be ready in an hour, she dismissed him for the time, and soon after summoned Harcourt to her presence.

The governor’s astonishment was quite beyond expression when he saw her, whom he had left in the morning almost the picture of despair, now looking animated and excited ; and still more was he surprised when he had received her communication.

‘ I told you this morning,’ she said, ‘ that I had no present intention of leaving the Castle. I little expected such a cause should arise for this change. I think you are better in ignorance of the place of Lord de Clifford’s retreat ; it must not be revealed, and might be painful to you in some shape. You will make your own use of the secret I have entrusted to your care, but on no account let it be communicated to another individual—I make no exceptions. Clifford Castle still owns him as master ; were he now here, I know he would enjoin peace. It would be impolitic, and, I think, now criminal, to give gratuitous

offence. I go this night, under the escort of Mr. Williams, to join the Earl.'

'I cannot brook your departure, madam, under protection so slight,' said the governor. 'Why, the country is in a perfect fever, from end to end.'

'I am not afraid,' she observed; 'and you must be aware that any party would at once provoke discovery. Say to your people that you keep the Castle on my behalf, and that, although urgent business has obliged me suddenly to leave it, they will keep it till I return to claim it at their hands, or till they are absolved from the trust. And now, will you do me the kindness to have my palfrey ordered in an hour?'

Harcourt was perplexed and uneasy; he thought Lady de Clifford was acting more under the impulse of feeling than prudence; but it was a case in which he could offer no further objections, and he bowed acquiescence.

Julia had a goodly-sized pillion of necessaries packed up for her own horse to bear, and another for Swinderby's; and when she crossed the drawbridge, it was with the feeling that she might never recross it again. She thought of her brother, and, could it be, she would fain have sent him some intelligence of herself; but she could not, her present errand required a stern silence that yielded not to the indulgence of those feelings which make up so much of the charm of existence in ordinary times.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MY good friend,' said the Countess to Swinderby, after they had ridden about a mile, 'I am concerned to think of the fatigue you have undergone. I fear you may suffer for all these exertions.'

'I have passed through a course,' he replied, 'that has enabled me to think light of bodily inconvenience. I have long felt that it is of little consequence where this clay tabernacle yields its tenant, so it be in the way of duty; the roadside will do as well as another place; and it may be Saltwood or Smithfield yet. But I am strong now, and only wish you were as equal to the task before you.'

'I feel able for anything to-night,' she said, 'and more free and light than I have done since I was left alone in that old castle. I am sure they are praying for me at Ashley.'

'You are well remembered there, as I know,' said Swinderby; and Julia's thoughts wandered for a moment to the scenes of her childhood; but they could not long be detached from the main subject, and, with one of those fits of despondency that often attend upon great excitement, she exclaimed—

'Oh! after all, what if I should find him gone?'

He was afraid her spirits were about to droop, and there was now a necessity for her to carry through what she had undertaken.

'I apprehend nothing of the kind, madam,' he said, earnestly; 'and we should not conjure up distresses that may never arrive, when we have so many, in reality, to try our faith.'

Julia had, in the feeling of the moment, let her bridle fall loosely on her horse's neck; she now gave it a sudden check, and their pace was considerably quickened. They stopped at a small house by the wayside, at a late hour, to refresh their horses. The sight of a female proceeding onwards, at the time they were again preparing to start, seemed strange; but the people of England were now become so inured to strange sights, that they had almost ceased to wonder at anything. Swinderby had just been expressing his satisfaction at their having met with so few persons hitherto, when a party of horsemen approached, with weapons glittering in the moonlight. Placing his companion as near the roadside fence as possible, and himself outside, Swinderby begged she would not be alarmed, as it was very desirable to appear unconcerned.

The troopers rode up to them, but Julia kept her veil so close that not a feature could be seen. 'Who goes there?' shouted one of the soldiers, casting an inquisitive glance at the travellers.

'Two peaceable individuals, seeking the favour of these bright nights for our business, like yourselves, gentlemen,' answered Swinderby, composedly.

'Hast seen any stragglng renegades, as you came along?'

'No; oh! no—none at all,' quickly answered Swinderby.

'We shall have our night ride for our pains, I dare say,' observed the questioner sulkily.

'Of whom are you in quest?' asked Swinderby.

'Who should we be in quest of, you simpleton?' exclaimed the trooper.

'Only some of those beggarly Lancastrians,' muttered

another of the party, fiercely; 'we'll pay them interest yet for the sleepless nights they have given us.'

Julia was terribly alarmed; but the soldiers were not disposed to put any further questions, and, to her great relief, the sound of their loud voices and of their horses' feet were soon lost in the distance.

'I trust we shall not meet any more of these people. I do long to be at my journey's end,' was her only remark.

'Dear lady,' said Swinderby, with a deep sigh, 'I wish you were in Clifford Castle, or at Pierrepoint Manor.'

'At Pierrepoint Manor I would not, and could not be,' she answered; 'and at Clifford Castle I have of late passed days and weeks of such distress, that to find simply that clear vault above, seems like liberty, and the fact of being in active motion, like hope.'

'Woe is me! a chequered life very likely awaits you,' observed Swinderby, giving expression to his thoughts.

'I am resigned to that,' she said; 'every other worldly consideration is secondary to my husband's safety.'

'Poor child!' exclaimed Swinderby, half audibly, for he regarded her in the light of earlier years, and he was grieved for her. By and by they turned into a more private road, and arriving at a sequestered house, fatigue obliged them to accept of its hospitality for a few hours.

As they approached nearer the termination of their journey, their anxiety increased; and when about to enter the narrow pass that led to the cavern, Swinderby often looked round cautiously to see if they were in any danger of being observed. He had chosen a way as distant from the scene of the late action as possible.

'Whereabout does fatal Tewkesbury lie?' she inquired.

'Yonder,' he answered, pointing to the direction; 'but we do not go that way.'

'I hope not,' she rejoined, at the same time earnestly

following with her eyes the point he marked ; ' but I wanted to know its position.'

As she was now within a very short time of ascertaining for herself De Clifford's real situation, fear predominated ; she thought her heart was prepared ; it was now found too rebellious to move at that orderly and self-denying rate into which she fancied it had been schooled. Her guide told her that it became necessary for him to walk the remainder of the way. The horse he rode belonged to a Christian family in that neighbourhood, to whom he was known ; he was furnished with one when he required it, and had only to dismiss it at a certain point, whence it easily found its way into an accustomed pasture.

' We are seldom in our wanderings advanced beyond pedestrianism,' he remarked as he dismounted ; ' and it would at present be unwise to make a formidable approach to the place of concealment.'

Julia at once offered to walk if there was any risk of detection by her riding farther ; and she proposed suffering her palfrey to take chance of following the companion of his journey, but Swinderby would not hear of it. He said he should find means of disposing of her horse afterwards, but meantime he could carry the additional pillion with which his own had been charged ; and in this manner they slowly pursued their way.

There was no beaten track ; the green turf and heath received no impression that could betray their steps, and created no sound that might be heard. The scenery was picturesque and beautiful, and such as, under ordinary circumstances, would have called forth warm feelings from those whose eyes now rested on its varied features. But surrounding objects take their colouring from the frame of mind with which they are regarded ; there are times when they can awaken no echo in the heart. After they had proceeded some distance, Swinderby said—

‘We have arrived at the spot, madam, and I must request you to alight.’ He made a low, but distinct sound; the signal was instantly recognised; and to Julia’s inexpressible amazement, after the rustling of some creepers close by where she stood, Blondel came forth as though he had emerged from the rock itself. She started, but not so greatly as Blondel, who, totally unable to give words to his astonishment, stood speechless before them.

‘How fares it?’ whispered Swinderby in a subdued voice.

‘The Earl is not worse,’ answered Blondel, still almost doubting the evidence of his senses.

‘Can he bear,’ inquired Swinderby with hesitation,— ‘think you can he bear a sudden surprise?’

‘He sleeps at present,’ was the answer.

‘Well,’ responded the querist, ‘we shall take advantage of this to step in at once. But first, has there been any molestation?’

‘Not the least,’ he replied.

‘All favourable,’ observed the Countess; and Blondel, putting aside some branches of honeysuckle, discovered the entrance to a new and strange abode; she followed his footsteps, and they were immediately within the cave. Julia’s eyes had not yet become sufficiently accustomed to the dim light to be able to see objects distinctly; but she could distinguish the couch where De Clifford lay, and she walked softly up to it. He was still asleep, and Blondel had been afraid to introduce a light. The sufferer’s breathing was laboured and difficult; and he muttered occasionally words which could not be understood. Julia knelt upon the ground, and bent over him in silence, while Swinderby and Blondel stood back respectfully. Presently the Earl began to move; and Julia, recollecting that should he awake suddenly and see her, the effect might be injurious, rose and placed herself in a position where she could be concealed from his view. She had

scarcely made this change, when he raised his right arm as if in vehement action, and cried out, 'The prince—the prince will be taken. On! on! De Clifford to the rescue!' and in the effort he opened his eyes. Julia was just retiring, and it would seem that he had caught a glimpse of her figure, for, mingling the idea with his dream, he cried, 'Blondel, what did I see? I was again, as I thought, in the field of Tewkesbury; and just as that frightful vision passed away, I saw a form very unlike those which had surrounded me the previous moment. My brain is in terrible disorder; what connection could she have with such a scene, except through me?' he added despondingly. 'I wish Swinderby was returned. Oh! I am parched; fetch me a drink, Blondel.'

Julia made a sign that she must be suffered to present it. The cup was placed in her trembling hands, and stepping forward, she offered it to the Earl. He stretched out his hand to receive it, but hastily drew it back again, and by a violent exertion raising himself upon his elbow, he gazed at his wife in unutterable astonishment.

'My brain has been deceiving my senses at intervals of late,' he said; 'but I am not deceived now. Julia—my Julia, how—why came you here?'

'I did not find much difficulty in coming,' she answered; 'and I had not to seek for a reason. But you will not refuse the first thing I offer.'

He had forgotten his thirst for the moment; he now took the cup from her hand, and drank its contents, and as he returned it, he exclaimed, 'Oh, my Julia! I little expected to see you in this dismal place.'

'My lord,' said Swinderby, interfering, 'your surgeon has also come, and would suggest that you do not thus excite yourself. Lady de Clifford has performed the journey perfectly well; I am sure you do not wish to distress her.'

'Her safety was the subject of my most intense anxiety,' he said, with painful emotion; 'and how she is to exist here I know not.' He sunk back, and Julia, with watchful affection, started to try if she could give any aid.

'Did you think, then, that I could stay at a distance?' she asked. But he seemed unable to reply; and she went on: 'I left all quiet at Clifford Castle. Harcourt's attachment is invincible; but no living creature, save those now with you, knows of the place of your retreat.'

'The fate of Clifford Castle must soon be dissevered from mine,' he said. 'I learn from Blondel's report that all opposition to the Yorkists must be at an end.'

'All that Harcourt perfectly understands, and will act upon,' she observed; 'and so little can we read futurity, that, I think, it would be well to distract ourselves less with conjecture. We may yet see brighter days.'

'My poor Julia, you would make an effort to sustain me, who ought to be sustaining you,' he said. 'I would, for your sake, I could cherish hope; but why should I deceive you, or myself? Our cause is finally lost. The Earl of Warwick ought not to have fought a battle before our arrival—but why do I talk to you of battles? I have not yet heard of the fate of our brave prince, but I fear the worst; and no stay of his house remains that men may conscientiously contend for.'

'Howard,' she said earnestly, 'surely I do not hear you breathe a wish for more of this disastrous strife. We are but involved in a calamity common to thousands. To me how light is everything else that can befall while your life is spared! With you I shall find a happy home anywhere in this wide world. Dear Howard, what does it signify where we live, if only we live the life of the righteous; and what shall it signify where we die, if our latter end be like his?'

De Clifford had her hand clasped in his while his eyes

were resting on the rugged roof of his abode; when she ceased speaking, they were turned upon herself, while he said—

‘Julia, I have weakly been lamenting for you the loss of a fading earthly coronet, while you have been pressing forward for the prize of an enduring crown. Time was when I had mapped out a happy lot in old England, despite her manifold distractions. I have required shaking and sifting in no common degree; but I know it comes from a Father’s loving hand.’

A torch was now lit, and Julia had a clearer view of the extent of her husband’s sufferings; while he read in her pale countenance, that it was the spirit only which lent such vigour to a frame that otherwise would have been by this time rendered unfit for the smallest exertion.

‘Where can she rest?’ he said, as his eyes wandered over the rude place.

‘You shall see how many comforts we have carried with us,’ she observed; and, beckoning to Blondel, the treasures of her travelling equipment were displayed.

‘This is a reunion under manifold trial and difficulty,’ remarked the Earl, addressing Swinderby. ‘I would ask to be made willing to leave all things at the sovereign disposal of Him who loves his own for ever. I confess, with shame, that I have had heart reserves which marred my sincerity; I have been keeping back a part of the price. I desire now to cast it all at his feet—you understand me, my friend?’

‘I do,’ he answered. ‘You feel as if you had been disposed to make terms of agreement with Him who is worthy of unlimited trust. Your heart has said, though you would shudder to own it, let the devastating tempest take all I have, save one little flower. Let me see this treasure in a sheltered corner, and I resign the rest. Has it not been so?’

‘It has been even so,’ responded De Clifford; ‘there was an idol on the throne.’

They knelt around him, and Swinderby, entering fully into the case of his suffering friends, with fervent pleading, committed them to the guardianship of the Shepherd of Israel.

Soon after this was concluded, De Clifford insisted that Julia should try to have a little sleep; and she was soon thereafter stretched upon the strangest couch she had ever occupied. She was far too much fatigued and her mind too busy for repose, but she was still; and believing her to be in slumber, no word was spoken much above a whisper.

Swinderby’s next care was to examine into his patient’s condition, which, notwithstanding the disadvantages under which he laboured, was found to be satisfactory. He was now supplied with fresh bandages, and other comforts which had become real luxuries. In the hope that the exertion to which he had been subjected might procure rest, the anxious attendant sat down silently by the pallet; but the Earl, weak as he was, began to question him respecting the observations he had made, the information he had gathered in his late journey, the state of the country through which he had passed, and very especially, the history of his sojourn at Clifford Castle. These were requests Swinderby could not refuse to comply with, and he communicated whatever particulars he deemed interesting, not concealing that he found the Countess believing herself a widow.

When he had concluded, De Clifford asked if he really thought that the fact of his survival could be concealed for a time? He was assured that there seemed no probability of its present discovery; though suspicion might possibly be awakened by the absence from home of Lady de Clifford.

‘Could I by any means be removed from this place,

said the Earl, 'before it is known that I live, I might in a peasant's disguise remain unsuspected till I could leave the country.'

'I know one Christian family in this neighbourhood where I could procure you lodgings,' said Swinderby.

'But the hopelessness of my being able to move,' added the sufferer, despondingly. 'Ah! my friend, I fear I cling still to life with all its sorrows; but you know it is not of myself alone I think.'

'We must wait for a day or two patiently,' replied his friend.

'This to me is like living again the days of Piedmont,' observed the Earl; 'only I was a sound man then.'

'Those hard days were a good preparation for this, my lord; and may do much to facilitate your recovery,' remarked Swinderby.

'But my wife! she never knew such,' he said.

'Ah! she has a preparation still better to keep her from fainting by the way,' answered his friend. 'The desert may be long and dreary; but whenever she needs it, I believe she shall find an oasis of verdant pasture, a grove of overshadowing palm-trees, and a well of pure and living water.'

'You are right,' answered the Earl; 'my misgiving, obdurate heart requires much discipline. You told me that the conqueror still tarries in our neighbourhood, and his emissaries are doubtless in fierce pursuit.'

'He proceeds to London very shortly, I hear,' observed Swinderby.

'To prosecute, confiscate, and slay,' added the Earl.

'England is already stripped of the majority of her ancient nobility,' said Swinderby; 'and I imagine the few yet remaining will embrace any amnesty that shall be offered, to conduce to the peaceable settlement of this long distracted kingdom.'

'It is probable,' replied De Clifford, 'if there be any among them, not implicated beyond the reach of Edward's forgiveness—my case is far without the pale. But I trespass on your friendship and your patience with my troubles.'

'Not so, not so,' answered Swinderby; 'my best endeavours to serve you are ever yours to command; my sympathies are also yours, in so far as they are worth, and that is all I have in the world to offer.'

'And that is much,' observed the Earl. 'I thought, had matters terminated differently, to have had the means of affording such protection as should have enabled you to dwell in peace in your native country, and my poor faithful Blondel too! But my dreams have been vain, and I wish I could learn implicit submission.'

'I appreciate your kindness, my lord,' replied his friend; 'but I am assured I shall have all that is needful to me, and locality has long since become altogether indifferent. I have no interests like yours to bind me, and I look for no resting-place save in heaven.'

De Clifford was now extremely exhausted, and expressed a wish to be left quiet. Blondel placed the light in a position where its glare could not be offensive, and Swinderby left them for a time. The season was such as to render shelter almost indifferent to one so much accustomed to exposure; and he wandered out to the cool clear air. Lady de Clifford's poor palfrey was faring not quite so sumptuously as he was accustomed to do; and it was best, he thought, and safest, to remove him. He determined on taking the horse to the friend's house, of whom he spoke to the Earl; he always had found a welcome there, and he would claim their hospitality for the favourite. He was anxious also to obtain what additional information he could, and to feel his way in the prospect of removing his patient.

Swinderby was kindly received at the farm-house, and in the course of conversation with the family he learned several new facts. The Prince of Wales was no more. Many noblemen and gentlemen, who had survived the engagement, had already fallen victims to the revenge of the conqueror. Sanctuaries had proved no protection to such as were discovered there in the heat of the first burst of vengeance; and some had made their escape into Wales, where he was sorry to learn that Lord Pembroke still kept the field. These, he was persuaded, were the last struggles of the expiring fire; but while any such remained, there could be small hope of safety for his friend.

From the peculiarities of Lord de Clifford's history, he was personally a stranger to the king; but it could not be supposed that Edward had forgotten the circumstances under which he had quitted England; and these must operate very unfavourably on his case. The king doubtless must be aware of his being one of the leading partisans of the Prince of Wales; the consequences of his discovery then, at this juncture, might be fatal, and the chances of his betrayal were manifold, disguise him as they might, for without help he could not move in any way. On the other hand, his recovery would be rendered extremely doubtful in his confined and comfortless place of hiding; and the Countess could not remain there any length of time, while the step she had taken rendered it now unsafe for her to return to Clifford Castle.

All this passed through the mind of Swinderby. He had intended paving the way for the reception of the Earl, under the name of a sick friend requiring retirement and pure air; but in this he now found he could make no movement for the present. He had told his host that he must leave them by daybreak, and he accordingly departed unnoticed before any one was up.

A mental process very similar to his own had been ex-

perienced by another anxious heart. Julia had left home in the simplicity of purpose to share her husband's fate while he lived. She thought of no arrangement save that which she had made with Harcourt.

If Swinderby had formed a right estimate of the Earl's condition, he might possibly be removed to a greater distance from the danger of detection, until he was sufficiently recovered to quit the kingdom. But she was contented to leave the future in the dark mantle of its uncertainty, and was only then anxious to be with her husband. He loved domestic peace; he had not been privileged to enjoy much of it; and although henceforth they might probably be deprived of the means of luxury, yet, together, they could not fail to be happy. Alas! when she had full opportunity of judging, she became alive to the reality of De Clifford's helpless state. He could do nothing for himself; he could not be brought out of the cavern without being carried; and although she should not have despaired of his bearing a careful removal, it seemed impossible to effect it without discovery; her own presence might increase the danger of his detection. She could not have acted otherwise than she had done, and yet she trembled to contemplate the consequences. Danger in another form added to the dismal picture, for she now saw that in the cave he could not stay without manifest danger to his life. Her heart sank within her as she lay awake, during the temporary absence of Swinderby, revolving these harassing thoughts. At length, in the midst of her painful and distracted feelings, an idea, which must have been the offspring of the last degree of perplexity, came to her mind; it was, that a personal application from herself to the king might work upon his feelings to grant the Earl permission to leave the country. But a difficulty stood in her path that she did not see how to surmount. She believed it was concluded that the Earl had perished at Tewkesbury,

and this, more than anything else, would favour his safety; was she, then, to volunteer the information of his survival? It was not to be thought of. She must wait for further information; and waiting was endangering De Clifford's life hourly.

When Swinderby entered the cavern, he found her seated beside the Earl; she rose on his entrance, and, placing her finger on her lips, signified to him that the sufferer was asleep. The scene before him was little calculated to elevate the depressed spirits of the good man. Beckoning him to a distant corner, the Countess anxiously inquired what intelligence he had gathered, and if he had been able to see any possibility of De Clifford's removal. It was with pain he told her that there could be no present hope of such privacy as would suit their purpose, within any distance of Tewkesbury to which the Earl was able to travel, his helpless state exposing him to hazard in every shape, and his wounded condition, which could not be concealed, at once marking him as an object of suspicion. He told her that the king was exasperated by the report that Lord Pembroke's force still held out in Wales, that he continued to have the country scoured with double vigilance in every direction, and that no one so taken had as yet escaped his vengeance.

These tidings were dismal, and Julia felt them so. The narrator proceeded. 'There is another important event which might materially affect the Earl's conduct, could he but be screened for a while till the ferment of the country and the fierce rage of men's passions shall somewhat subside. The Prince of Wales is no more.'

'Is it really so?' exclaimed Julia. 'Alas! poor youth, his life has been short and cloudy.'

'It has,' resumed Swinderby, 'and he was, as I believe, worthy of that attachment Lord de Clifford felt for him. But if I understand his lordship fully, he will now be satis-

fied that no right principle could possibly suggest continued opposition to Edward the Fourth. England demands from a patriot some consideration of her desolated condition; Christianity demands of those who profess her holy doctrines, that inasmuch as lieth in us, we live peaceably with all men. When these horrors pass away, if indeed my honoured friend should survive his injuries, I have formed a false estimate of him, if he would not be among the first to accept the benefit of an amnesty; not for mere personal security, but upon conscientious principles. I believe any further attempt to sow dissension in the country at the present moment must be the result of wicked faction, to which I feel assured he would not be a party.'

'Oh! he could not, would not, I am certain,' said Julia; 'but how, how are we to proceed now? If he could but be placed more comfortably, he might perhaps creep through; something must be done—much must be risked.'

'I wish,' said Swinderby, 'any reasonable plan could be devised. It is no use concealing anything from you: I have now no doubt that the fact must have been ascertained of Lord de Clifford's having survived the battle, for the field was searched for the bodies of the leaders, and as every one who escaped is supposed to have gone over to Lord Pembroke in the Principality, he is of course on the list of the absent.'

The face of his auditor, instead of assuming a more desponding cast, seemed partially to brighten. 'Your last information,' she said, 'is not so gloomy to me as you seem to think, for the belief of Lord de Clifford's decease, which at first appeared so favourable, I now see could avail us little, while we are still forced to continue as we are; could we remove, it might indeed be serviceable. I cannot sit here and see him expire, without an effort to save his life. The idea which crossed my mind you, I know, will consider

wild ; but I am now resolved to carry it into effect. You have learned that the king is yet at Gloucester ?’

‘He is, and leaves it to-morrow, as is supposed,’ he replied.

‘Then there is not a moment to lose,’ she rejoined ; ‘and your tidings have sealed my determination. I shall try if there dwells any compassion in the breast of the Yorkist.’

‘By what means, dear madam ?’ inquired her anxious listener.

‘I shall tell you,’ she resumed. ‘As I was distracted with anxiety while I passed the night waking, a thought came into my mind, that could I but present myself unexpectedly to the king, without his obtaining any previous knowledge of my purpose, I might induce him to yield to sudden impulse, what he would deny to formal solicitation. The only motive that caused me to hesitate adopting this plan, was the fact that it would be the means of discovering that Lord de Clifford is yet alive ; I could not bring myself to risk that, while he dwelt secure even in his gloomy retreat ; but now it seems not only probable that it is already ascertained, but that suspicions of further hostility rest upon him. De Clifford’s devotion was to the prince—the prince can benefit by it no more. I am aware, my friend, that you will think my project chimerical ; but can you advise any other ?’

‘Alas ! no,’ he answered ; ‘but I fear you have not calculated well the cost of your undertaking. Do you not see that if you fail, which is most likely, you destroy our last chance of safety, by leading to the discovery of our hiding-place ?’

‘There is no earthly power that could prevail upon me to divulge the secret of our retreat,’ she said. ‘If my mission be unsuccessful, I shall not return here direct—and your cave is as unknown as ever. If I should con-

tinue to sit here in the wasting anxiety that harasses me, I believe Lord de Clifford's life would be the sacrifice. I shall not have to accuse myself, and add to the sorrow of a broken heart, by the reflection that I made no effort to save him. I have watched by him for some hours this morning, and my conviction is, that his remaining here many days longer must prove fatal; can you wonder that I should be willing to risk anything that leaves the shadow of a hope that this woe might be spared me?'

Swinderby thought for a moment, then taking a light in one hand, and shading it with the other, he went over to the sufferer and contemplated his countenance, while Julia fixed her eyes on his, there to read his true opinion. 'His sleep,' observed Swinderby, 'is not very easy, I own, but it is as sound as could be expected in his condition; and though I must confess my hopes are less sanguine than they were when I journeyed to Clifford Castle, I do not yet see any symptom about his lordship to render his recovery hopeless, but his comfortless situation may induce danger.'

'I can see your opinion of his case differs little from my own,' she said, with a faltering voice; 'it is no use talking of what might have been; what I now wish to know is, how I can best reach Gloucester?'

'That part is not difficult to manage,' replied Swinderby. 'Blondel could arrange that your palfrey meet you on the road; he would also be your attendant, and we have one or two humble friends in Gloucester, where you might rest. But, dear Lady de Clifford, I see appalling difficulties in the way. What is to become of yourself? how are you to gain admittance to the king's presence? should your object be defeated, how are you to act? and how am I to undertake the task of comforting the now unconscious heart that beats with such affectionate care for your safety?'

Julia sat down and wept.

'It grieves me to distress you,' he continued; 'but there is no real friendship in decking the perils before us in false colours. I beseech you to consider well what I say.'

'I have considered and turned the subject in every possible light,' she said. 'I did not hide from myself the darkest side, and yet I can only come to one conclusion. If I am unsuccessful, I shall not, as I said already, return here at once. I can, I suppose, be sheltered for a night with those friends you speak of at Gloucester. I have not left home without the means of securing help, and in that case, you must again seek me there. I cannot arrange further. Blondel can come back here without the knowledge of any one, for he need not expose himself to recognition as I must; and then the Earl must be made aware of the whole truth.'

'But how am I to account for your absence in the meantime, madam?' asked Swinderby.

'I have some faint hope that I might be absent without being missed for some hours,' she said. 'The Earl has passed a sleepless night, and now seems disposed to slumber. I heard you talk to him of the propriety of a composing draught, if natural sleep was not induced. I hope this may now be dispensed with; but in either case, the time will so far pass away quietly; and I think, should he miss me, he will readily imagine that I am resting, for he has been ever anxious about that. Go, my friend, to instruct Blondel in his mission, that I may reach Gloucester in time. I will take my post here by Lord de Clifford; I know not if ever I shall watch by him again.'

Swinderby went to lay all his perplexities before the throne of grace.

In the meantime the invalid awoke, and found his wife seated beside him. He expressed uneasiness on her account, and almost extracted a promise that she should

soon retire to rest, for the distinction between day and night had almost faded from his view.

'Howard,' she said, 'I wish I had you at home.'

'It would be hard to determine where that may be, my gentle one,' he answered.

'Would it not be pleasant,' she resumed, 'to find yourself in Clifford Castle, and to be looking out upon your own favourite oak trees, now putting forth their buds?'

'It would,' he replied; 'but, my dear Julia, if ever I have any home on this earth, it must soon very likely be in a distant land.'

'Well,' she rejoined, 'but if you could dwell in England, would it not be desirable? The land of your birth—the land of your fathers—the poor distracted land that so much requires the healing waters of the truth poured upon its thirsty soil—would you not see it your duty, if you could, to fill the station in which it pleased Providence to place you?'

'I would, Julia. I desire nothing but peace; and I trust, wherever I may be, the peace of my country shall be no longer broken. But do not be occupying your mind by shadows, my Julia. For your sake I would I could see any prospect of a peaceful dwelling in England; but how can that be? Perfectly assured as I am that any further attempt to set up the Lancastrian claim at this time were but to involve its abettors in the criminality of destroying some thousands more of our fellow-countrymen, without the least prospect of advantage to the cause, I could not be a party to any such attempt, were my days prolonged; but, Julia, were it even in my power, could I suffer my name to be enrolled in the list of deserters from our noble prince, now captive, and probably doomed? No, such a tale shall never pain his ear—such a stain shall never mark my name. If I am spared, and escape detection, I must once again seek safety in exile, till calmer times succeed.'

‘My dear Howard,’ said his wife, ‘this is a subject which need not perplex you now. Prince Edward of Lancaster will no longer cause an uneasy thought to those who served him, save as they mourn his early fate—he is no more.’

The Earl was deeply affected, but after a short silence he said, ‘I did scarcely expect otherwise; but Englishmen little know the treasure they have lost. Did you hear any further particulars?’

‘None concerning the prince,’ she replied; ‘but Lord Pembroke, it is said, is at the head of a large army still, and the king is greatly irritated.’

‘This is unjustifiable,’ observed the Earl. ‘If his lordship has received authentic intelligence of the prince’s death, his duty is to suffer those poor men to depart to their dwellings.’

‘This, I was sure,’ she said, ‘would be your opinion; and when the storm is hushed, it may be some amnesty shall yet be granted to enable those who desire it, to return to their homes once more.’

‘The peculiarity of my position,’ he said, ‘must ever exclude me from considerations that might benefit others. All my hereditary rights are forfeited, and could my personal sollicitation reinstate me in them all, Julia knows it is a price, at which I could not buy them. My heart is wrung for the burden I have been so unhappy as to lay on you; for the rest, I could bear it calmly, and it is right and meet I should.’

‘This is a theme on which you must not indulge,’ rejoined his wife. ‘Will you not try, dear Howard, to say, without regard to outward circumstances, “I will both lay me down in peace and sleep?” You know why.’

De Clifford was melted. ‘The exhortation comes sweetly from you,’ he said. ‘I have proved the entire security of such repose; but the world is more present with me than

my condition warrants, and my inability to prolong our conversation is, at this moment, a note of warning.'

He complained of oppression from close air, expressed a desire for change that could not, alas! be procured, and Julia was more and more convinced of the propriety of the resolution she had formed.

As soon as Swinderby appeared, De Clifford again spoke of his distress at his wife's continued watching, and besought her to seek some rest, while his kind friend would take her place beside him. This facilitated her plan. Swinderby contrived to tell her quietly that he had made the necessary arrangements, and that Blondel stood waiting without. Immediately after, he engaged the Earl's attention, and Julia, taking advantage of the opportunity thus afforded, left the cavern unnoticed by her husband, and emerged into the broad daylight, for the first time since her arrival at Malvern.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

T was a bright summer morning ; but the sunshine was little in unison with Julia's oppressed feelings. She entered Gloucester while it was yet early ; but all-powerful custom rendered it proper that the court and nobility should be seated at dinner, sooner than our modern fashionables choose to breakfast. Avoiding the principal street, Blondel led the Countess through a by-lane, and stopped before the humble dwelling of an artisan, where she was readily accommodated in the best way he could afford, while her attendant went out to make observations.

The town of Gloucester was crowded, and there was an universal bustle. A report had arrived of the disbanding of Lord Pembroke's troops. The king was about to depart from the city ; but the sound of minstrelsy that issued from the bishop's palace, where he resided, proclaimed that the monarch was still at dinner. There was too much business on hand to render it probable that a long time should be wasted on the usual ceremonial. The shortest, however, seemed long to Julia in her anxious state of mind. She employed part of it in writing a letter to De Clifford, which Blondel was to take charge of, in case of her being prevented from returning, by forcible detention or otherwise. It was arranged that he should wait for intelligence at the house where they lodged ; and

taking with her a little girl, the daughter of her host, she set out for the bishop's palace. The sentinel at the gate refused to admit her, and she seemed to be defeated at the very outset. It was in vain she pleaded urgent and secret business with the king; a nameless stranger was not to be admitted to the monarch's presence, and the company had not yet left the festive board. But Julia had risked too much to draw back at the very threshold; and as she understood that Edward would leave Gloucester that day, she was resolved, as a last resource, to wait his coming forth to the highway. She ventured to ask at what hour his majesty was expected to leave the city; and received for answer, that it might be a matter of three hours hence, or thereabout. She was just going to retrace her steps to the house where she had been so hospitably received at first, when a person in military dress crossed the court-yard, and was about to pass though the gate at which she stood. He stopped on observing her, and she had no difficulty in recognising Gerald de Courcy. She had not seen him since her marriage, for he had been one of the number that accompanied King Edward when he fled to Holland, and had only returned with the late successful expedition. She instinctively shrank from a recognition, and yet it might serve her essentially; at all events, it could not be avoided, for he was within a pace or two of her.

'The Lady—Lady de Clifford, I believe I should say,' he muttered confusedly.

'It is long since we have seen each other,' she observed timidly; 'and you have met me under strange circumstances.'

'What can you seek or expect here, dear lady?' asked De Courcy, in the warmth of his feelings.

'I can scarcely utter what I expect,' she replied; 'but will you, can you procure me an audience of the king?'

‘Are you alone?’ he inquired.

‘You must not question me,’ she said entreatingly; ‘you have, perhaps, seen my brother Henry since your return to England, as I perceive from your address you are aware that I stand in some connection to you. If ever the name of your noble cousin was dear to you, you will try to serve me in this one particular; but get me introduced into the presence of the king, I ask no more.’

He gave her his arm, and they passed by unquestioned. De Courcy brought her into the palace, and ushered her into an apartment where no one could overhear their conversation. ‘I shall use my best endeavour,’ he said, ‘to obtain you an audience; but I fear this is not a very suitable time to present any request that may come from one so nearly connected with my lamented cousin. I believe, however, the king is not aware of your marriage, and that may be favourable.’

‘What errand do you suppose I could possibly have to induce me to come here, but one on his behalf?’ she asked in surprise. ‘Will you inform me if it is believed he fell at Tewkesbury?’

‘It was supposed,’ answered De Courcy; ‘but as no discovery of his person has been made, suspicions are afloat that he joined Lord Pembroke, or is elsewhere rousing the country.’

‘I come to contradict these reports,’ she said. ‘He is in a place of sure retreat, but dangerously ill; and if I cannot obtain some grace at the hands of the king, to enable me to procure for him a more suitable shelter than he has at present, he cannot long survive. This you will allow to be a good reason for my appearance here.’

‘I fear you have put yourself in the lion’s mouth,’ said De Courcy.

‘There is a Power,’ she remarked solemnly, ‘that can shut the mouths of lions. I am willing to run the risk

and to abide the consequences. Lord de Clifford knows nothing of my embassy ; and, I confess, I do not now wish to pause for thought. I beseech you lend me a helping hand.'

'The king has just retired from table,' said De Courcy, 'and is now engaged in transacting some business with the Duke of Clarence. Perhaps the present moment may be the most favourable that you could have, if I can but procure your admission ; I may not, however, mention your name. I shall go and make inquiry ; and in the meantime no one shall intrude upon you here.'

De Courcy was in high favour with the monarch ; but he was afraid his influence might not prove sufficient to persuade him to receive a stranger at this busy time.

When Julia was left by herself, she remembered that she was in a bishop's residence, and thought of Lambeth. She remembered also her deliverance out of that trial, and was encouraged. It was true, she was not now about to be questioned for her faith, yet she was in the way of duty, and she believed that she should be strengthened. Fortunately the court was not under the formal restrictions of etiquette, that might have rendered access to the monarch more difficult. Edward was on the move, and his cortége was more in the style of a temporary encampment than anything else. Eager for intelligence in the still unsettled state of the country, he was ready to listen to every passing report ; and to these circumstances De Courcy owed the readiness with which his petition was granted, to see a gentlewoman who earnestly implored the favour of an interview. The king's observation was—

'We have not much time to waste on romance ; but we must not suffer our knightly courtesy to be altogether extinguished in the din of these exterminating wars.'

De Courcy hastened to report his success to the Countess. He besought her to keep up her courage, and to beware of

suffering any incautious word to be wrung from her in a moment of trepidation that might mar her purpose. He saw that he might himself be involved in some trouble by being a party to the transaction, should the king be offended; but, in such a case, a selfish motive could not deter him.

By keeping steadily in view the object of her hazardous mission, Julia endeavoured to cast away every enervating suggestion as she accompanied her guide to the audience-room. Her courage almost failed, notwithstanding, when De Courcy threw open a door, which she thought would disclose the monarch to her view, and she breathed more freely when she found it was only an ante-room. Her conductor, however, thought it best to hurry her forward, and the next moment she was in the immediate presence of the sovereign and his brother, while De Courcy bowed and retired.

Julia's veil completely concealed her countenance, and the king, approaching, said, 'These rude times leave us little leisure for the honour of ladies' visits; but, fair petitioner, we would know your name.'

She put her veil aside, and Edward, instantly recognising her, started back a pace, exclaiming—

'Ah! a stranger, in the times when our more peaceful court might have been graced by your presence. To what singular event am I to attribute a visit such as this?'

'I come, sire, to solicit a boon,' she replied in a low and timid voice; 'and, if I judge by the amenity of your reception, I shall not sue in vain.'

'Lady, you shall not prefer a request to me standing,' observed the king, at the same time offering her a chair.

She, however, declined it, saying, 'My suit it becomes me to present in all humility, sire.'

'Name it, lady; we can anticipate nothing you have to crave, that we shall not willingly grant. The sister of Sir

Henry Pierrepoint, who so nobly redeemed his pledge on the field of Barnet, will confer on us a pleasure in serving her. How fares it with your gallant brother?’

‘Well, as I trust,’ she answered; ‘and, I am sure I may add, that he chiefly regrets his injury, inasmuch as it prevented him from again joining your grace’s banners. I do not come, however, to ask anything on behalf of my brother, my errand concerns the Earl de Clifford.’

‘The Earl de Clifford!’ apostrophized the king, ‘what can you know of him? He is one of those yet amissing. It was believed he fell in the late battle, it is now doubted. We have as yet no authentic report of him; but as he has not been found, we have set on foot a strict inquiry.’

‘My liege,’ said Julia, ‘I could divulge the particulars of Lord de Clifford’s fate; and, on one condition, I am prepared to do so.’

‘Indeed! but this is a singular circumstance!’ observed the king. ‘We should have scrutinized the kingdom, before we should have thought of applying to so fair an informer. What may be the reward expected for your proffered service?’

‘The granting of your royal clemency,’ she answered, ‘for one, who, although he has the misfortune at present to be under the cloud of your displeasure, may nevertheless be found one day worthy of occupying a different place in your grace’s estimation—even the Earl de Clifford.’

‘Living or dead,’ said the king, sternly, ‘he can never expect from me aught but a traitor’s due. If he be living, as your information imports, I suppose he has been connected with the late hopeful stand my Lord Pembroke has thought fit to make in Wales.’

‘Sire,’ replied the petitioner, ‘any one who may have lodged such an accusation against Lord de Clifford, has most unjustly traduced him. I hope my word will be taken for an assurance that he never bore arms but once,

at Tewkesbury. He not only has no hand in the rising to which your highness alludes, but he has no sympathy with it in any way.'

The king was astonished. 'Lady,' he observed, 'I am at a loss to conceive in what manner your interest can be linked with a family to which I am not aware that you stand in any degree of relationship; and your appearance here, at such a time, and on such an errand, is not very consistent with the retiring habits, which, as we understood, made you a stranger in Queen Elizabeth's court. We can hardly recognise in your present position, the fair and modest sister of Sir Henry Pierrepont.'

'My liege,' she replied, with an extraordinary degree of dignified composure, 'the suit I came to present, were all unseemly in Julia Pierrepont, but I am sure your grace will own it to be not unbecoming in Julia de Clifford. I come, sire, to solicit your gracious consideration for my husband.'

The king frowned, and his keen light eye was kindled up with an expression from which his petitioner shrank. She was forcibly struck with the sudden transition. She now saw how instantaneously his courteous manners could give place to stern abruptness, and the bland smile, to features that very unpleasantly denoted the working of passion.

'So!' he exclaimed, 'matters stand thus, do they? There is, then, evidence that the traitor lives. Lady de Clifford, if so I am to address you, you have united your fortunes to a man who has outraged our feelings, borne arms against us, and persevered in his rebellion to the last. He hopes, perhaps, by your intercession, to elude the fate he merits tenfold; but he cannot long escape detection; and I should be wanting to the peace of my kingdom did I not take all possible means to rid it of so dangerous a man.'

'Sire,' she said, 'Lord de Clifford knows nothing of my solicitation. He is too disinterested and noble to have made such a suggestion to me; and were he not beyond the reach of probable discovery, you should not have seen me here now.'

'We may find means even of inducing yourself to afford the information we want,' hinted the king.

'Never!' she said firmly. 'But I cannot think your highness capable of asking me to betray my husband to certain ruin. I am sure no kingly or knightly breast could harbour such a design; nay, I am not yet hopeless that you will grant the boon I crave. Mercy is the brightest jewel in the conqueror's crown; and it is surely pleasant to reign in grateful and faithful hearts.'

The king grew impatient. 'Lady,' he said, 'the easy access to our presence, to which we too often yield, is attended with many evils. My time is precious, public business awaits me; and if I suffer you to depart unquestioned, and leave to chance the discovery of Lord de Clifford's retreat, I think my clemency cannot be gain-said.'

'Your clemency will grant still more,' she said timidly. 'Lord de Clifford lies dangerously ill; it may be he shall not live to feel the benefit of your grace's kindness; but I do trust, in case he shall yet be able to make any exertion, I may obtain liberty for him, at least, to quit England unmolested, when and how he shall be able to travel.'

The king did not expect so much perseverance. He was annoyed by the application, and yet he could not conceal from himself that the case was an interesting one. A variety of suggestions arose to his mind. He saw, that should he, on such an occasion, and at such a moment, carry his threat of compulsory measures towards the detitioner into execution, it was an action which would be reprobated by all parties; it would be as impolitic as

cruel. He had, on her introduction, received her as the sister of one of his brave supporters; the discovery of her connection with the Earl de Clifford did not absolve him from the claim she had on his courtesy. He was unwilling to extend any favour to an individual of the Lancastrian party; he had private reasons for being peculiarly offended with Lord de Clifford; but he was quick-sighted enough to perceive that, by unbending rigour in this case, so singularly and so unexpectedly brought before him, he might arm against himself the prejudices of many. Had he been fortunate enough to secure the Earl's person, no consideration would have held him back from satiating his revenge; death on the field of Tewkesbury he would have thought too lenient a fate for one whom he regarded as an implacable enemy. The late transactions proved that tenderness formed no part of his character; he took small delight in the exercise of mercy, and he was reckless of human life. He had now learned that the man, on whose behalf solicitation had just been made, was reduced to a condition that rendered him incapable of resistance; he hoped he was past recovery, and never likely to benefit by any forbearance that might be extended; he wavered, but he was still deeply averse to open any channel of escape to a destined and desired victim.

The Duke of Clarence had hitherto been a silent listener, but his feelings were more easily touched than his brother's. He recollected, too, how recently he had himself been united to the party now defeated; perhaps his heart smote him for the part he had acted throughout. He was aware of Lord de Clifford's relationship to his late father-in-law, with whose fate there could not fail to be associated in his mind some painful thoughts. He approached his brother, saying—

‘ Might I be allowed to suggest, that a well-timed exercise of the royal prerogative would be a likely means to conquer the hearts of your grace's subjects, who may yet

linger in fruitless but painful opposition. I am persuaded that many hold out, not from any expected advantage, but because, from the many examples already made of their friends, they entertain no hope of reconciliation. We are all tired of bloodshed, and it is impossible that Lord Pembroke will be mad enough to make any further hostile demonstrations. It appears to me that this is the most favourable opportunity your highness could have for granting a grace of this kind. I am acquainted with the character of Lord de Clifford: if he recovers, your clemency will secure hereafter his unshaken fidelity; and, indeed, I would ask no better guarantee for his loyalty to you, than his faithfulness to the cause of your rival.'

'A learned argument, my sapient brother,' observed the monarch, a little sarcastically; 'you know the value of such steady attachments.'

The Duke felt the point of his brother's remark, but he was conscious it was not unmerited; and while he was recovering from the unpleasant sensation it excited, Julia ventured to say, 'My liege, I can desire no better advocate than your royal brother, in whose breast my case has found compassion; he says truly, in Lord de Clifford your highness would gain as dutiful a subject as England contains.'

'Set a dangerous man at liberty, to disturb the peace of my exhausted kingdom!' answered the king; 'this is sage counsel.'

'Your highness should never have cause to regret the granting of my request,' she urged. 'However Lord de Clifford has been misrepresented by his enemies, he is no factious person; and although it may be thought that his services have been misbestowed, they were conscientiously given. But now there is no opponent to trouble your grace's repose, and I pray that England may have cause to rejoice under your government; I know no one more

likely to promote her best interests than Lord de Clifford, if it please Providence to spare his life; and no one can better appreciate a generous action, in the depth of his own generous heart, and for this I offer my pledge, if that be deemed of any value.'

Her appeal seemed to take a momentary hold of the monarch's imagination; his heart was not so easily affected. 'He has a warm advocate at least,' was his remark.

'Sire,' she resumed, gaining courage in the idea that some impression was made on the mind of the king, 'I came here friendless and unprotected, to cast myself on your generosity, in the recollection of the time when I saw you in the festive circle, only giving and receiving pleasure. I came in sorrow and in anxiety; it is in your royal power to send me away in joy. I am aware it is also in your power to cast me into a prison; but it shall never be in human power to extract from me the place of my husband's retreat.'

Edward's impatience increased. 'Knows your brother anything of this strange embassy?' he inquired.

'I have not seen my brother since he was wounded at Barnet,' she replied. 'He knows not where I am; he is in no way implicated in my offence, if offence it be to sue, as I do humbly, for the boon I have so much cause to desire.'

The Duke of Clarence again chimed in.

'Permit me,' he said, 'to add my intercession;' but it was in a low tone of voice he added, 'your grace may obtain the credit of a generous action at a very small cost; for it is like enough Lord de Clifford will not survive his injuries. Were he capable of flight, it is not probable his wife would have risked so dangerous an experiment, as, I must think, nothing but desperation could have caused her to make; while the report of your

clemency, which will quickly spread, must, I am convinced, operate most beneficially on such as despair alone renders obstinate.'

'Clarence, Clarence, you are made of soft materials,' interrupted his brother impatiently. 'What security am I to have for the allegiance of this turbulent man, who, of all rebels, deserves least grace from me?'

'All I venture to recommend,' answered the Duke, 'is your giving your consent for his remaining in England undisturbed, say for six months, provided he is found willing to do so in peace. I would of course have a proviso, that should he in any way, during that time, be found by word or deed aiding or abetting your enemies, he at once forfeits his life. The barons of England have fallen around us like the leaves of autumn;¹ the ancient aristocracy is reduced to a fractional part, we can hardly spare any that we may redeem. Your son and heir is yet in infancy; and ere he arrives at manhood, he may come to experience the good effects of his father's generosity. From my personal knowledge of him, I would sacrifice something to secure Lord de Clifford's fidelity. If, then, at the end of the time I have named, he be found willing to swear allegiance to you, your heirs and successors, I would, I own, willingly receive his homage.'

'I have no idea of being worked upon in this manner,' replied Edward, who had no wish his brother should imagine he could wring anything from him. De Courcy's attachment to his person he could not question, yet he felt annoyed with him for the part he had taken, in bringing this unpleasant interview upon him.

'I'll have no more of these extempore introductions,' he said, passionately. 'I care not for the opposition or opinions of any party. I fear none of them; least of all need I court the remnants of that base Lancastrian faction,

¹ Note T.

which shall be trodden low as the dust beneath my feet before I have done with them.' Having given vent to this ebullition of anger, he walked to the opposite end of the apartment; then, suddenly turning round, as if to rid himself of the matter, he said, still addressing his brother, 'That these people may see how little I fear their most hopeful supports, this lady may bear to my Lord de Clifford the signification of my pleasure, that he may stay in England or quit it, as a matter of perfect indifference to me—only mark, there shall be a close watch on his actions: the first offence shall be fatal, with the most summary measures; and this holds only for six months; at their conclusion he and I shall settle accounts.'

He was about to retire, when the Duke represented, that after making up his mind to grant so great a boon, it would be more valued if declared by his own lips to the anxious expectant. Edward was arrested; he turned towards Julia, and momentary compassion seemed to influence his manner, as he said—

'Madam, I yield to your solicitation, and to my sense of your brother's claims, what no other consideration could have induced me to do. You have chosen for yourself a bold, but certainly a wrong-headed protector. You may carry to him this message, that he is at liberty to remain in England for six months, provided he proves himself an obedient and peaceable subject, of which I must have certification. In the meantime, he shall find me security for the fulfilment of these conditions; at the time prescribed, should he decline to appear before me, to swear allegiance to me and mine, for all time coming, he is a doomed man. And now, Lady de Clifford, you have obtained more from me than I thought of ever granting to an individual of your husband's faction less inimical to me than he has been. I honour you for the part you have acted, and when calmer times give leisure for recounting events of the past, the

ladies of England shall hear of this. I only wish I could name you otherwise than De Clifford.'

Julia was more overcome by the unexpected manner of the king's address than she had been during the whole of the trying interview. She attempted to frame a reply, that might convey some faint acknowledgment of her delight and gratitude; but she had only time to say, that she would pledge her own word for the fulfilment of any conditions into which Lord de Clifford might enter, when Edward retired from the apartment, and left her alone with his brother.

'I congratulate you, Lady de Clifford,' said the Duke; 'and now, how can I have the pleasure of being further serviceable to you?'

'If I am deficient in expression,' she replied, 'it is because I am quite unable to compose my feelings. Your grace will excuse me, if I say, I wish for nothing but to be placed outside the palace gates—for the rest I am duly provided.'

De Courcy was in the ante-room, and she was committed into his charge. He was overjoyed at the unexpected issue of her mission. She was resolved still to maintain silence as to the place of De Clifford's concealment, and to depart from Gloucester in the same fashion she had arrived. The cave might serve her friends in the hour of need; its locality should not be discovered through her means. The hurry that prevailed favoured her, for every one had something to attend to. De Courcy had scarcely a spare moment, yet he was unwilling to part with her again without being satisfied that she was properly attended. He accompanied her to the gate where he had been first startled by her appearance, and there they found her little guide seated on a stone.

'I am now quite independent,' said Julia; 'this little

damsel is my attendant. I may yet, perhaps, offer my thanks to you in a more suitable place than this.' De Courcy saw that she wished him to leave her, and it was not very prudent in him to tarry much longer.

'My service deserves small thanks,' he replied. 'We require some interludes between the tragedies that are enacting. I wish they were at an end, and I were free to hail my noble cousin, at length, lord and master in his princely old halls. It would be pleasant indeed, to see them graced with the presence of one, to whose courage and devotedness they shall owe the restoration of their rightful owner.'

De Courcy returned into the palace, and Julia followed the footsteps of her youthful conductor to her father's lowly but Christian dwelling.

In her feeling of delight she wished there were means of reaching Malvern by some process more rapid than contrivance had yet suggested.

She put a piece of gold into the hand of the astonished child, saying, 'Bring me by the nearest possible way back to your father's, my little woman, for I am in haste.'

When she arrived at the house, Blondel thought he could read in her countenance the success of her mission; but the good woman who was their hostess, saw only a much excited, and as she could not help thinking, a much exhausted creature, in the slight and graceful form that crossed her threshold, exclaiming—

'The horses, Blondel! we must not lose a moment.'

'Dear 'art,' said dame White, 'what ails thee? Sure thou'st no strength for all this running and riding; pray do rest till I fetch summat to comfort thee.'

'Many thanks,' said Julia; 'but I cannot stay a moment longer than Blondel brings the horses; I am quite strong.'

Her appearance, however, contradicted the assertion, and she sat down completely overcome, on a hard and

homely settle. The good woman was very assiduous in her simple hospitality, and her guest resolved that she should not forget how Christian a welcome she had found, while desirous to show her all the kindness in their power; though quite ignorant of her rank, their 'deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.'¹ All they knew of her was that she stood in need of their present attentions, and they remembered the injunction, 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers.'

During the short interval of Blondel's absence, she learned that this poor family picked up a very scanty subsistence in Gloucester. They might easily be made happy in the neighbourhood of the Castle, where White might exercise his calling of a carpenter, and would be a useful man in the village, where she had contemplated many stirring improvements, during the short period of her peaceful stay at Clifford Castle.

Blondel made all the haste he could, and in less time than she expected, he was again at the door.

'Good-bye,' said Julia, holding out her hand to her hostess. 'I hope to meet you again, and be sure I shall not forget your kindness.'

The dame made a low courtesy, for she now began to think she had been entertaining no ordinary visitor; and her impression was confirmed by her little girl, who, creeping behind her mother, pulled her apron, and opening her hand, displayed the golden treasure.

The Countess had just mounted her palfrey, when this discovery was made.

'Oh, Bessy, my child, 'tis a mistake,' said the mother, as she hastily went up to Julia.

'Look here,' she cried, 'you gave the child gold, madam; I am glad I found it in time. Dear 'art, what a thing it had been but ten minutes later!'

¹ 2 Cor. viii. 2.

‘My good woman, it was no mistake,’ replied Julia. ‘If I live, I hope your little damsel shall have a larger remembrancer than that of the day she guided me to the bishop’s palace. It is her honest fee well earned—how well you may perhaps learn another time—farewell!’

The wondering dame stood looking after her in astonishment, until she was out of sight. As soon as they were beyond the town, Julia said, ‘We must put our horses to their speed, Blondel; but first I will relieve your mind by telling you that the Earl is now at liberty to go where he pleases.’

‘I was afraid to ask any questions,’ he replied; ‘but I thought your ladyship had good news. The righteous shall not be forsaken, and even his enemies are oftentimes constrained to be at peace with him.’

We shall now take a survey of the situation of the two individuals we left in the desolate cave. The sufferer had sunk into a heavy sleep, and his anxious friend had watched beside him, fearing lest the very sighing of the summer breeze might awake him.

Towards noon, Lord de Clifford opened his eyes, and looked up to see who sat beside him. He took some refreshment from the hands of Swinderby, and seemed to understand, or take for granted, without a word spoken on the subject, that his wife must have retired to take the rest she so much required.

‘I am glad she is not there,’ he said. ‘It pains me to see her watching so closely; she will never be able to stand it. I know it would be vain to ask her to leave me, so, my friend, I must quit this place, come of me what will. But we must talk softly, she seems to hear every motion.’

‘It will be best for all concerned, that there be little talking at present,’ observed Swinderby. ‘If you are to risk removal from this, my lord, you will need all the strength you can gather.’

The attendant soon had the satisfaction of finding his patient again slumbering, while he employed himself in following, in idea, the travellers in whom he was so deeply interested. He had been in many and varied scenes of trial, but never before in a situation more painful. Unable to form any plan for adoption in the event of Julia's absence being discovered, or of her not returning, he could but live in the hope that when he was actually placed in the dreaded dilemma, he should be made to see clearly how to act. It was now verging towards evening, and he was sure that the long sleep of the sufferer must soon be succeeded by wakeful hours. He stretched himself across at his feet, resolving, if he heard him move, to remain perfectly still, unless his services were absolutely required, that he might be supposed to be asleep himself, and thus try to pass away the hours that seemed so long till he might reasonably look at least for Blondel's return. At length he heard some noise without, and, immediately after, a well-known signal told him that the tidings of good or bad import had really come. He rose from his couch with less caution than usual, and the Earl called out in some alarm, 'What is it? I thought I heard a sound; Swinderby, be still, or we are betrayed.'

'There is no danger, my lord,' replied his friend, and rushed out immediately.

'Dear lady,' he cried, 'your presence, I do trust, bespeaks tidings bright and joyous; but I see you are quite exhausted.'

'It is a very temporary inconvenience,' answered Julia, as she descended with difficulty from her saddle; 'it is well repaid. Tell me, what of Lord de Clifford, has he inquired for me?'

'He has believed you were reposing, madam,' replied Swinderby; 'and, indeed, he has himself been so much in slumber, that he seems to have no idea of the many hours

that have passed away. He, however, caught the sound just made by Blondel, to announce your arrival; it agitated him, but your appearance will soon tranquillize him again.'

She would have been glad of an opportunity to creep in unobserved, and of time to manage the breaking of her tidings cautiously to the sufferer, but this could not now be; and, indeed, a full and free disclosure was more in unison with her overflowing heart. De Clifford was on the watch; and what was his surprise when he saw his wife enter, and evidently off a journey!

'Julia,' he said, 'Julia, how is this? I believe I shall never have my faculties again. I can scarcely frame a question. I thought you were resting!'

'But my time for rest was not come,' she replied, as she stooped down towards the lowly pallet, and strove to conceal the agitation under which she laboured. 'You shall also rest, I trust, in a place more befitting your state. Do not look at me as if you thought me raving, dear Howard; but tell me, will you be at peace with Edward the Fourth?'

'My dearest Julia, what mean you?' he asked. 'You well know that the choice does not rest with me, nor is it likely to do so.'

'But, indeed,' she said, 'the choice does rest with you now.'

He looked at her in painful suspense; for the dreadful idea came across him, that her harassing circumstances had unsettled her mind—what else could make her talk in this manner? Yet there was no indication about her of any aberration of intellect; she was flushed and excited, but her eyes beamed with their wonted intelligence. He was silent, and she resumed—

'I say the truth, your deliverance out of this sad place depends upon yourself alone. Shortly, dear Howard, the

king grants you liberty to do so, on terms that rest with yourself to ratify.'

'Was there, indeed, interest enough in England to obtain such a boon?' he inquired. 'I did not believe there was such in existence. Tell me—tell me all. Could you?—but it is impossible, you could not have had any communication with Pierrepont Manor.'

'I had none,' she answered; 'but you know surely in whose hand is the heart of the king; and that, as the rivers of waters, He turneth it whithersoever He will. This is the best interest to have; and when human help is vain, then is the time for this power to shine out resplendently. Perplexed with a host of difficulties, seeing you sinking, merely because you could not obtain what liberty would give, I asked and obtained courage to go to the king, to plead your cause. You will say it was a rash resolve; but the result has been to my heart's content.'

'Julia,' he said with emotion, 'this is what I never would have sanctioned.'

Her heart beat quick;—had she, then, been mistaken? Perhaps he would not submit to the terms required, and then her embassy had been worse than vain. Her eyes became dim, and she was unable to speak.

'There is nothing,' he continued, 'I could not easier bear, than that you should make humble suit to the conqueror, and risk to be indignantly spurned for my sake. The thought stirs me with feelings not yet subdued; this would indeed be a trial beyond my calm endurance.'

'If this is all,' she observed, 'there is no cause for your agitation. I heard that the king was at Gloucester; I went and pleaded for the removal of the forfeiture that might affect your life,—at the least, for liberty to quit England. I said I was sure you would never be found a factious disturber of the peace; I affirmed that you were peculiarly fitted to appreciate a generous action; I also

told his grace, that I supplicated on my own responsibility, not on yours. I should have deemed myself fortunate to have secured the lesser boon, but I obtained more than I had almost dared to hope,—even six months' freedom in England, with a conditional pardon at the end. My part is done; it remains with you to redeem my pledge.'

Feelings like De Clifford's were not to be expressed. Here was a gentle, loveable creature, who in ordinary times would have been thought incapable of that determined resolution, and ready, unshrinking self-sacrifice, which her affection for him had urged her to make,—the risk she had run, and the consequences to herself of an unsuccessful termination, were thoughts that burned within him, and his first words were, 'Your pledge shall be redeemed, were my life the forfeit; can Julia think for a moment that her word is less dear to me than my own?'

Her face was irradiated with delight as she said, 'Then you are free to leave Malvern this night. The king has, by this time, left Gloucester on his way to London; had I delayed an hour, I might have been too late.'

'But,' observed De Clifford, 'I seem in a dream. How was a name so detested announced in the offended ears of royalty? how did you obtain an audience?'

'For that I am indebted to your cousin De Courcy,' she answered; 'my name and my errand I had myself to disclose.'

'And how were you received?' he asked anxiously.

'I had a mingled reception,' she replied, 'the particulars of which you shall hear again. The Duke of Clarence was present, and aided my suit most kindly.'

'Poor, vacillating man!' said De Clifford, 'he has woven a web that will one day entangle himself. His nature is pliant, and his heart can feel, although his judgment cannot direct.'

‘But you have not inquired how much I undertook to promise for you,’ she rejoined.

‘I am satisfied,’ he said, ‘that you promised nothing you believed I could not in conscience fulfil.’

‘I know,’ she resumed, ‘that however appearances might favour a contrary opinion, your country’s peace is dear to you. You told me this morning you desired peace. I know you to be incapable of faction; therefore I could not but conclude that the contest being decided, you would acknowledge the supremacy that is thus established, on the principle of rendering unto “Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s.”’

‘And you were right,’ he said; ‘it would be unchristian and unpatriotic to act otherwise. I never can cherish a personal regard for the character of Edward the Fourth; but England’s sovereign may claim my homage, and England herself shall have my best services, if I live; if not, my wife shall take her rightful place in that circle her name will honour; and if I had any scruples remaining as to my line of conduct, this would decide me.’

‘But,’ observed Julia, ‘there is a proviso. At the expiration of six months it is required, as the price of your permanent reconciliation, to repair to King Edward’s court, to swear allegiance to him, and fidelity to his heirs.’

‘Six months,’ repeated De Clifford: ‘how many are the changes that may and are likely to happen in the interval! But for the present, my Julia, I think the joy of seeing you delivered from the miseries in which you have been so innocently involved will prove my best restorative. ‘Swinderby,’ he continued, ‘you have sorrowed in our sorrow, and rejoiced in our joy before; come now, and once more express for us the gratitude we feel, the sin we deplore, the desire we cherish to be enabled to devote the time, the wealth, and every advantage we may enjoy, to

the Giver of them all. We have, indeed, experienced the bitterness of trial; I trust it will teach us to sympathize with those who mourn, and to use prosperity, when we have it, with humble hearts.'

The next object to be attained was the removal of the invalid,—the how, and the where. He was quite unfit to bear fatigue; but the greatest difficulty was overcome by there being no longer a necessity for his concealment. He expressed a wish to leave the cavern that very night; and Swinderby went to prepare the farmer's household, for there only they could go in the first instance; while Julia, now entirely unable to exert herself further in any way, was easily persuaded to rest once more on the uneasy bed her dark abode furnished forth. They wished to remove in the night, to escape observation, as well as to protect their poor retreat from discovery, as it might at some future period be a welcome refuge to the persecuted and oppressed, in a country so subject to civil commotion. Lord de Clifford fondly hoped the tragical field of Tewkesbury had closed the long-protracted strife; but the wandering Wycliffite would still be hunted as a bird on the mountain, and might perhaps flee hither for shelter.

As Swinderby proceeded once more to his friend's dwelling, he seemed to be lightened of ten years of his life. He found no difficulty in obtaining the best accommodation that the farmer could give, and was readily promised all the comfort his house could afford, for the sick man. There was some degree of surprise manifested at the late hour chosen for the stranger's arrival; but they were reconciled to it by a little explanation. The season rendered it immaterial when persons might choose to journey; the night was almost as favourable as the day. Caution and contrivance were both required in removing the sufferer; but there was good-will and ready invention to aid.

The farm-house, which was to become their temporary abode, was simple enough; but to those who had been exposed to so much peril and discomfort, its comforts were luxury. They were at liberty, and the charm of this boon was intensely felt. Julia was deeply grateful for the strength that had been granted to her in her great necessity; but now that she was no longer called upon to any great effort of mind or body, she was overcome with the natural result of fatigue and over-excitement. When she retired to rest, her bodily powers seemed spent, but her mind was tranquil—full of trust and gratitude, and without a harassing thought for the future. She had no present dread of her husband's suffering on simply political grounds. The danger arising out of their religious profession was habitual to the mind of the Wycliffites, but on that account she felt no concern. The Author of the truth she believed and lived upon, could and would take care of his own. Why should not they sleep soundly who know that they dwell in the cleft of a rock, where even the timid dove feels safe?

The comforts the invalid had around him, homely as they were, soon made him experience some relief from suffering; and when an open lattice admitted the fresh morning air, coming with aromatic sweetness from the neighbouring fields and more distant hills, he breathed freely, and hoped for speedily recruited strength to proceed onwards. This he could not attempt for a day or two, even in the most cautious manner possible; and it was therefore resolved to send Blondel to Pierrepont Manor to relieve the anxiety that must prevail on their account, with the pleasing report of their welfare, and comparative safety.

De Clifford was still very anxious to learn the particulars of the last moments of Prince Edward; but there

seemed a mystery about it that no one was willing to unveil. Who would at such a time venture to attach suspicion or blame to the conqueror? The Prince had been hardly used; but who would or could tell who was most to be condemned for it? Contemporaries feared to avow the opinions that history openly records.

It could not be easy for one in De Clifford's situation to fall in with the popular tide, but it were unwise to indulge in expressions of disappointment. He ventured to relieve his mind by speaking to Swinderby; but the latter always strove to turn the conversation towards a practical and useful conclusion, and his friend was easily led to concur. It was on one of those occasions the Earl remarked—

'I had built high hopes for my country on the future career of Prince Edward, had he been spared to fill the throne. He was educated in such principles as ought to guide the sovereign power of a free state. Sir John Fortescue made a noble use of exile in this respect. I am satisfied he never would have sanctioned persecution for conscience-sake. But my short-sighted calculations rebuke me; I thought the time was dawning when the gospel might have had free course in England. I thought too much of prosperous times at hand.'

'My friend,' observed Swinderby, 'you know that the purity of primitive doctrine became corrupted when men must have thought the brightest results would accrue from Christianity being embraced by a Roman emperor. Human protection is desirable, but human policy often runs counter to spiritual simplicity; and we have seen the cause marred, rather than benefited by such means; this is to teach us to "cease from man." Whenever his aid is required, it is, and ever shall be, made avail-

able; but truth must eventually triumph over every opposition.'

'It shall, even here, as in all the world,' responded De Clifford. 'I do not expect to see it, but it is an honour of which I feel myself unworthy, to be called to witness for it in a dark and cloudy day.'

CHAPTER XXIX.



THESE prominent events in the history of Lord de Clifford had all taken place in the course of a few days, and Julia had returned from Gloucester to Malvern before the fact of her absence became known, either to the old Countess or to Sir Henry Pierrepont. The report of the Earl's death had reached them immediately after the accounts of the battle of Tewkesbury. Sir Henry was not yet able for great exertion; moreover, he remembered with annoyance, the indignity offered to his messenger by Harcourt; yet his sister's situation pressed painfully on his mind, and he resolved on endeavouring to see her. It was impossible to suppose that any of the Lancastrian adherents should make any further show of resistance; the new master of Clifford Castle would not desire it. At all events, Julia now required his protection, and he could not hesitate how to act. He made no delay in going to his sister. Without attempting to enter the Castle, he demanded an interview with the governor. Harcourt was soon in attendance; and though Pierrepont was prepared to treat him with some degree of haughtiness, as he looked on the aspect of gloom and desertion the Castle seemed to wear, and thought of the mourner he believed to be within, he was softened, and acknowledged in his heart, that the bold uncompromising man before him was deserving of nothing

but commendation for fidelity to his trust. The governor looked grave and downcast.

'You cannot doubt the object of my appearance here,' was Sir Henry's observation; 'my inquiries are after my sister.'

Harcourt was affected. 'Sir Henry,' he replied, 'you are too honourable not to understand the principles on which I acted, while my charge was to keep the Castle, by bolt and bar, by bow and lance. I could see no distinction of friend or foe, except in the banners they followed. I would not now detain you to parley a moment on the errand on which you come; but our noble lady is not in Clifford Castle.'

His auditor started, and changed countenance.

'Fled—fled,' he muttered, 'where?—was not my house her most reasonable place of refuge? Harcourt—the place—where fled my sister?'

'As I owe to her the fidelity I kept with my beloved master,' replied the governor, 'I can and will afford no further information on this subject, save that she herself told me soon to expect her return.'

No remonstrance could tempt Harcourt to further disclosure,—he was indeed dumb as the old walls; and although Sir Henry owned that faith and attachment like this were very good and admirable, yet he felt them not a little annoying when they crossed his wishes so greatly as they did at the present moment. If Julia was not in the Castle he had no business there; he was not inclined to prolong his conference with the governor, and wheeling round his horse, he turned homeward without dismounting.

Aroused by the dismal news that reached her, the dowager Lady de Clifford had also determined to leave her retreat, and travel with all speed to the desolate Castle; but the distance was considerable, and her mode

of transit not very rapid, so that she did not meet Sir Henry Pierrepont at all. When she arrived, she too was amazed beyond measure at the absence of her daughter-in-law, but the inexorable Harcourt remained stanch as ever to his resolved secrecy.

The Countess, however, gathered from some of the domestics, that Julia had left the Castle at a late hour, in company with the Earl's mysterious friend, Mr. Williams.

She sent a special messenger to Pierrepont Manor, who brought back a reply that nothing was known there of the young Lady de Clifford; and it was finally conjectured, that she had taken refuge somewhere among her heretical friends, although her reasons for such a step could not easily be imagined, when an asylum so much more suitable was at her service, either under the protection of her mother-in-law, or in the house of her brother. The old lady was satisfied, at any rate, that she had fled from anticipated danger, for she did not believe her capable of much firmness under so trying an event. In this opinion she was undeceived by Harcourt, who in no measured terms expatiated on the dignity and resolution she had manifested since the commencement of the recent troubles. He also confidently asserted that she would return and nobly vindicate her own actions.

They were not long kept in suspense, for the Earl had left the cavern by the time his mother had reached Clifford Castle.

Early on the first day of the Earl's residence at the farmhouse, Blondel set out for the Manor, and soon thereafter Sir Henry was put in possession of the singular and eventful particulars of the last few days. He determined at once to go and be himself the happy escort of the weak and wounded to the abode of his ancestors. Blondel, of course, was his guide, and forgetting how lately he had been unfit for travelling, and disregarding the inconve-

nience of having but the use of a single arm, Henry, after inditing a letter, and despatching it to the Castle with his joyful intelligence, set off in high spirits towards the farm-house, never before tenanted as it had now the honour to be.

It soon became evident that the removal of Lord de Clifford from the damp and unwholesome place where he had been concealed to the pure atmosphere he now breathed, together with a relief from the burden that oppressed his mind, were working on him a more rapid change than could have been expected. He was very anxious to get home, and Swinderby had no doubt that the best thing that could be done for his patient was to allow him to proceed slowly to his own house. They only waited Blondel's return, whose assistance was prompt and useful, and the interval of rest was every way advantageous, preparatory to a farther journey.

They were beginning to feel anxious to hear, and were talking on the subject, when the pleasant announcement was made that Blondel was in sight, accompanied by another, who soon proved himself, to their entire satisfaction, to be Sir Henry Pierrepont. His meeting with his sister and with De Clifford was joyful. He forbore to make any allusion to the political position of the Earl, until he himself introduced the subject. In talking of it he said: 'I do deplore the dread catastrophe; but knowing as I do, in whose hands are the issues of life and death, I bow to his decision. I trust there will be peace in England; for my own part, my wishes extend no further than to be suffered to dwell on my own patrimony with unfettered conscience. Whatever construction may be put upon my conduct by others, you at least will own that I would not yield my principles a sacrifice to personal convenience; but there can be no right principle in involving this desolated country in further troubles.'

‘We are not, however, quiet yet,’ replied Sir Henry. ‘My Lord Pembroke’s force is now dispersing; but some other attempts are making on the coast and elsewhere, enough to exasperate a less irascible temper than King Edward’s; and I wish you were once more in Clifford Castle, to prove to those who do not know you so well as I do, that you have no connection with such doings.’

‘Henry,’ rejoined his brother-in-law, ‘you will credit me when I declare, that had I escaped unhurt from Tewkesbury, and had no chance of any reconciliation with the king, I would not now be accessory to such wild and sanguinary proceedings. The Prince of Wales is no more. How he perished, I pause not now to lament, nor have I been able to learn an authentic account. With him was extinguished what kindled my ardour in the cause, for I thought he was destined to be a blessing to this kingdom; and I would rather be still in my place of hiding, with no prospect before me in life, but the possibility of a disguised escape to the Continent, than have one feeling in common with those who are yielding themselves up to desperate courses, which cannot be the result either of reflection or principle. Bigotry forms no part of the virtue which I esteem to be consistency.’

‘Bigotry is a very ugly thing,’ said Henry; and then, as if the remark he was about to make had no connection with the sentiment he had just uttered: ‘By the by, what have you done with my *quondam* confessor? Blondel has been pouring into my ears the praise of his attachment and exertions on your behalf, till I have half forgiven him his apostasy. Julia, what of your knight-errant?’

‘I dare say he is keeping out of the way,’ she answered; ‘he does not think his presence would be agreeable to you.’

‘But he is quite mistaken,’ said her brother. ‘I am not in leading-strings; and am not accountable to prelate or priest for the company I choose to keep.’

Swinderby had slipped out quietly, and when Henry inquired for him, he was 'meditating in the field at eventide.' When he returned, at Julia's summons he joined their circle. Sir Henry received him with cordiality, assuring him, that he considered himself deeply his debtor for the essential services he had rendered to his brother and sister.

As the evening closed, Julia said to her brother, 'Henry, you are in a strange situation to-night. As you have carried with you no attendant but Blondel, you are alone, in a manner, in this family; for there is not another individual in this house who is not liable to be criminated before the high authority of the Established Church. The kind family here have asked permission to be present while we engage in social worship; your friend, there, is our chaplain. Will you imagine yourself at Ashley, and remain with us?'

'You shall not send me away by this hint,' he replied; 'I will stay. Do you think my faith is not sufficiently well grounded, to stand against all I can hear contrary to it?'

'You shall hear only Scripture truth, dear Henry,' she said; 'and if it should prove contradictory to that which you believe, I hope your ground of confidence will yield to it.'

Sir Henry was more disposed to judge favourably of the gossellers than he wished to allow; he witnessed the simple and affecting scene that ensued with deep interest. He was entirely satisfied with the sincerity of his old confessor; and the petitions he put up that evening in his own behalf, were not unnoticed.

On the following day, the party left the farm-house. De Clifford performed a short journey with considerable difficulty; but after a night's rest, he determined to continue his route. An escort of Sir Henry Pierrepont's

followers met them by the way, and here Swinderby and Blondel proposed taking their leave, to return to the duties of their office, and their wanderings to and fro. The Earl, however, would not hear of it: he observed, that no one might gainsay his freedom to take to his own house what guests he chose, so long as they were peaceable subjects; and that, for the present, Clifford Castle could afford them a safe asylum, without their being obliged to mingle with those whose presence might endanger their safety; so they proceeded together, and by slow degrees reached the termination of their journey, where they were anxiously expected, and where the Earl was hailed with a degree of enthusiasm proportioned to the sorrow that had been felt for his supposed death. Aymer soon joined the party, and the dowager lady prolonged her stay till she was satisfied that her son was rapidly recovering, when she took her leave and returned home.

By the time that summer began to melt into autumn, Lord de Clifford was partially recovered; and up to that period Swinderby had been an inmate of his house. Blondel was recognised by a few individuals; but they had no grudge against him, and he was, so far, quite safe. Swinderby's brethren of the convent were well aware that their accusation of the page had been groundless; and the intervening time had been filled up with too many painful events, to leave any likelihood that the particulars of so humble an individual's history should have left any impression on the minds of the neighbouring population; so that he had nothing more to dread, than could not fail to attach to the profession to which he adhered. The state was still too much engaged with other matters to trouble themselves greatly about the conviction of lollards, and the universal confusion seemed likely to procure for them some additional breathing-time.

To all appearance, Swinderby might have remained at Clifford Castle for the present, without incurring any personal risk, had such a course consisted with his own views of duty. While his friend continued seriously ill, he willingly stayed; but now that there was no cause for apprehension on his account, the Wycliffite preacher was desirous to 'do the work of an evangelist.' The Earl was averse to his departure, and represented to him, how much work he might find among the surrounding villages, while his ministrations should instruct the inmates of his family, and a home be provided for himself as their chaplain. The offer was tempting; but he saw hindrances not to be overcome. The flock was widely scattered, the labourers were few. It would be pleasant to be engaged in building up a little flock in a quiet place, but the necessities of the times seemed to demand from him a more laborious line of duty. Lord de Clifford was well qualified to be the teacher of his own household, and it would be well that his talents for usefulness should be called out, which they could not fail to be, when he was left alone, the responsible head of so many dependants, the majority of whom were enveloped in the thick mists of ignorance and superstition, and instructors were too scarce to be thus grouped into a corner.

Blondel declared his determination to accompany Swinderby. So they took a solemn and affecting leave of the Earl and Countess de Clifford, while they carried with them the assurance of a welcome, whenever they might turn their steps towards their home.

At length the country became somewhat tranquillized. The parties that had, after the battle of Tewkesbury, attempted to create further disturbance, were soon put down, and no resistance was likely to be offered to the house of York. The troubles died away like the sounds of a subsiding tempest, becoming fainter and more faint,

until their force was spent. Longing for a cement of the broken ties that had long rendered the country a scene of anarchy and confusion, the English nobles who had espoused the Lancastrian side now made peace willingly with Edward.

While thus, from motives of expedience, others were yielding quietly to the established dynasty, Lord de Clifford's principles dictated the propriety of offering his allegiance to the king within the prescribed period; and for that purpose, he journeyed to London. The king, whose mind had time to subside into a state of calmness, could scarcely fail to be sensible that it was wiser to receive the homage of the remaining peers, than to reject it. When, taken by surprise, a provisional pardon had been wrung from him on behalf of Lord de Clifford—he had hoped its confirmation would never be claimed—he did not contemplate the probability of his presenting himself as he now did, voluntarily, and before the specified time. His first reception was frigid enough. It could not be expected that King Edward should treat the Earl otherwise than coldly at their first interview; but although a certain degree of restraint continued to characterize the feelings of each for a long time, yet, on further acquaintance with the object of his former resentment, the king at last became satisfied that De Clifford was not the factious man he had supposed. It was more pleasant to reflect, that he might live to promote his interests, than that he had doomed him to add to the number of those whose blood had flowed on the scaffold, or left him only the bare chance of escaping from his country, to become an exile for life.

When, at a future period, Lord de Clifford thought it right to appear at court, accompanied by his wife, Edward's manner relaxed, and he took an opportunity of saying to the Countess, 'Lord de Clifford and myself are indebted

to your ladyship for our reconciliation. I told you, on one occasion, which you will doubtless remember, that the Earl was a dangerous man; I still aver that; I believe he would prove himself so to any disturber of England's peace.'

But the court was a place they did not much frequent; it was altogether unsuited to their tastes, and its society incompatible with their convictions and habits. They lived at their own home, endeavouring to promote in every way the welfare of those around them, and teaching the important truths which they had found so profitable to themselves. They were much impressed with the duty of working while it is day; for, added to the universal and ordinary uncertainty of human life, there were reasons to render theirs peculiarly so; and every opportunity of advancing the spread of Bible doctrine, they felt to be proportionally precious. They scarcely expected to escape the consequences of inquisitorial observations, but they knew that light is not given to be put under a bushel; their duty by its reception was plain, and they were strengthened to work diligently, and to wait patiently.

The native vigour of De Clifford's character went out in deeds of active usefulness, while his judgment was very needful to guide the zeal to which his temperament inclined him. His heresy would furnish a ready handle for accusation against him at any time; and desirable as peace was, and much as he prayed for its continuance, it could furnish him no grounds to hope for personal security; and thus he was brought to live practically as a pilgrim and a sojourner.

No person would have recognised in Julia the heroine of such scenes as it had been her lot to pass through. Quiet and gentle, she was at Clifford Castle what she had been at Pierrepont Manor—the soother of the sorrowful, the helper of the distressed, and ready, as ever, to bear

witness, in life and in death, to the reality of that blessed faith, whose consolations she had proved to be neither few nor small.

In closing this narrative, many may, perhaps, be of opinion that it has not been wound up with sufficient minuteness, and may pronounce it unfinished, because each individual, on whose behalf any interest has been excited, has not been satisfactorily settled in life. It might lie within the legitimate province of an ordinary novel to provide for all its favoured characters, wealth and health, and all outward prosperity; the writer of 'Clifford Castle' does not wish to leave upon the mind of the reader an impression of mere sentimental beauty. She has never ascertained that there has been a certain point in the history of any individual, at which, while he remained a sojourner on earth, trial and suffering ceased. Poets have sung of imaginary felicity in a golden age; the experience of mankind abundantly testifies that it has no real existence in this fallen world. Many pleasing scenes cheer the dull road of the wilderness, and there are few in whose path some flowers are not found to bloom; but there is a canker in them all, except such as grow in the soil of paradise, and draw their nourishment from the fountain of living waters.

The young will dream of cloudless skies and multiplied enjoyments; but coming years will teach them the fallacy of such expectations. The buoyancy of youth casts its own bright hue on all around; else, even the earliest period of intelligence might convince that some grievance will come to cast its shadow on anticipated happiness. Some subtraction, some mortification, follows in the train of human occurrences, from the cradle to the grave. The child's history is the epitome of the man's. In infancy he fixes his wishes on a flower, or a bauble; if it is denied,

he cries ; if it is granted, it is no sooner in his possession than he pulls it to pieces with his own hands. In school years the holiday hours are looked forward to with delight ; when they arrive, their brightness is often obscured by disappointment in one way or other. The mere man of business may, in after life, look back with wonder on the things that engaged his youth with the ardour of intense interest ; yet he is, in fact, still pursuing shadows, which he is destined to find as unsubstantial, and as incapable of yielding true satisfaction.

But, in casting our eyes backwards on the times of which as correct a picture has been attempted as consists with their remoteness, it will readily occur that they were not likely to admit even of the sort of tranquillity that we are now privileged to taste ; the sound of the trumpet and the alarm of war was often heard, and when a temporary cessation of strife brought repose to others, the Wycliffites were all the more in danger of being betrayed to death. It is profitable, then, to contemplate them as they walked by the light of the divine testimony, through snares and persecutions, in a day of darkness and gloominess, and amidst difficulties to which the calmer period in which we live affords no parallel.

The faith of God's people is the same at all times, and in all places. They ought to carry about with them the impress of those who have been sealed from on high. They have ever found the provisions in the divine word sufficient for directing, sustaining, and comforting, under trials from which flesh and blood instinctively shrink. They have nothing in themselves more than others, but they ask, and they receive ; all the grace a human creature can have is imparted, never inherent, and it is given according to the time of need ; faith, strengthened by grace, makes the faintest heart courageous, and gives energy to the most timid spirit, and hence arise those

astonishing instances of moral heroism, at which the world is sometimes constrained to look and wonder.

The signs of the times point to a further sifting of professing Christians. The religion of many has no better foundation than custom or education, and such a belief is ill calculated to comfort under the ordinary troubles of life; how much less to carry its subjects through an open testimony in the face of such fiery trials as have been before made the means of testing the sincerity of others, and may yet await us! It would be wise to be taking heed to our ways and to make provision before the storm comes. The joy which the world can neither give nor take away, is not materially affected by any combination of earthly events; it may, and shall be found under all circumstances by those who seek it; and the possessors of this promised and heavenly gift are alone capable of understanding, in its full import, the state of mind thus described by the apostle: 'Sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing.'¹

Trials shall come,—persecutions may come; but, without fearing any reply that can be made to it, we repeat the apostle's question:

'Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?'²

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 10.

² 1 Pet. iii. 13.

NOTES.

NOTE A, page 10.

'Villains.' The peasantry of England were denominated villains, or vassals, under the feudal system. They had begun to emerge from a state of slavery at this period (the 15th century).

NOTE B, page 12.

'In partaking of the Eucharist, sometimes a cup of wine was given to the laity, though it was declared to be no part of the sacrament; at other times, they were put off with the washings of the priest's fingers.' (A.D. 1236.)—HENRY'S *History of Great Britain*, vol. viii. p. 86.

NOTE C, page 48.

Walker was a grocer, who had a crown for his sign. He was accused of saying that he would make his son heir to the crown—a mere idle speech, which was construed into treason; and the poor man was consequently executed, in the early part of the reign of Edward IV.

NOTE D, page 52.

' King James was not only an excellent performer, but also a capital composer, both of sacred and secular music ; and his fame on that account was extensive and of long duration. Above a century after his death, he was celebrated in Italy as the inventor of a new and pleasing kind of melody, which had been admired and imitated in that country. This appears from the following testimony of Alessandro Tassoni, a writer who was well informed, and of undoubted credit :—" We may reckon among us moderns, James, king of Scotland, who not only composed many sacred pieces of vocal music ; but also of himself invented a new kind of music, plaintive and melancholy, different from all other, in which he hath been imitated by Carlo Gesualdo, Prince of Venosa, who, in our age, hath improved music with new and admirable inventions." As the Prince of Venosa imitated King James, the other musicians of Italy imitated the Prince of Venosa. " The most noble Carlo Gesualdo, the prince of musicians of our age, introduced such a style of modulation, that other musicians yielded the preference to him, and all singers and players on stringed instruments, laying aside that of others, everywhere embraced his." All the lovers, therefore, of Italian or of Scotch music are much indebted to the admirable genius of King James I., who, in the gloom and solitude of a prison, invented a new kind of music, plaintive indeed, and suited to his situation, but at the same time so sweet and soothing, that it hath given pleasure to millions in every succeeding age.—HENRY'S *History of Great Britain*, vol. x. page 232.

NOTE E, page 58.

The order of knighthood was generally conferred on almost all gentlemen of family and fortune in the days of chivalry ; but hereditary baronetcy was not created till the reign of James I. of England. The order of baronet, or banneret, known be-

fore that period, was a distinction bestowed on certain occasions, and for particular reasons, but the title did not descend to successors.

NOTE F, page 71.

Roger Bacon, a Franciscan monk, flourished in the 13th century. His attainments in science were very wonderful. They were so far in advance of the age in which he lived, that the ignorant monks of his order became extremely jealous of their talented brother; and they imprisoned him for many years, under pretence of his being a magician.

NOTE G, page 93.

'Liveries'—a collation taken in bed, between eight and nine in the evening.

NOTE H, page 112.

The streets of London were first lighted with lanterns in the year 1416.

NOTE I, page 128.

The use of beads, to number prayers, was brought in by Pope Sixtus IV. in the 15th century.

NOTE K, page 163.

'Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, granted forty days' pardon to all who should say the Lord's Prayer and the

salutation of the angel five times, at the morning peal, with a devout mind.'—FOXES'S *Acts and Monuments*.

NOTE L, page 203.

The closing words of Swinderby's address are extracted from a sermon, thus styled by Foxe: 'A sermon, no less godly than learned, preached at Paule's Cross on the Sunday of Quinquagesima, anno 1389, by R. Wimbleton.'

NOTE M, page 233.

The fashions in dress were generally very extravagant in the 14th and 15th centuries. The inconvenient and extraordinary long-pointed shoes, called crakowes, continued in repute for an almost incredible time, in defiance of good taste, satire, legal enactments, condemnation by the clergy, and resisted even the influence of a bull from the Pope. In some instances they were fastened with chains to the knees. When Henry the Fifth was Prince of Wales, on the occasion of his appearance before his father to confess the follies of which he had been so guilty, he is said to have worn a cloak of blue satin, worked with oylet holes, and a needle hanging from each.

In the reign of Edward the Fourth, the practice of slitting the sleeves at the elbow began, with the design of displaying the fine linen worn beneath, which led subsequently to the mode of slashing and puffing the whole suit.

NOTE N, page 246.

A ragged staff was the cognizance of the Earl of Warwick.

NOTE O, page 256.

Lewis XI. established mails in France; but they were only for the conveyance of state despatches.

NOTE P, page 260.

'Barb' was the name given to the religious teachers or pastors among the Vaudois.

NOTE Q, page 288.

A species of fire-arms were called 'crakies of war.'

NOTE R, page 292.

The Earl of Warwick.

'This nobleman, commonly known from the subsequent events by the appellation of the Kingmaker, had distinguished himself by his gallantry in the field, by the hospitality of his table, by the magnificence, and still more by the generosity of his expense, and by the spirited and bold manner which attended him in all his actions. The undesigning frankness and openness of his character, rendered his conquest over men's affections the more certain and infallible. His presents were regarded as sure testimonies of esteem and friendship, and his professions as the overflowing of his genuine sentiments. No less than thirty thousand persons are said to have daily lived at his board in the different manors and castles which he possessed in England. The military men, allured by his munificence and hospitality, as well as by his bravery, were zealously attached to his interests. The people, in general, bore him an unlimited affection; his numerous retainers were more devoted

to his will than to the prince or the law; and he was the greatest as well as the last of those mighty barons who formerly overawed the crown, and rendered the people incapable of any regular system of civil government.'—HUME'S *History of England*, vol. iii. p. 182.

NOTE S, pages 293 and 312.

The weather-vane was at this period sometimes made to represent the heraldic bearings of a family.

NOTE T, page 354.

'Edward (iv.), determined to secure that crown by law which he had gained by arms, issued writs, May 23, (1461), summoning a Parliament to meet at Westminster, July 6th; but the unsettled state of the country, and the dread of an invasion from Scotland, caused it to be prorogued to November 4th. So many of the nobility had fallen in battle, or died on the scaffold, or had been driven into exile, that there remained only one Duke, four Earls, one Viscount, and twenty-nine Barons, who were summoned to this Parliament.'—HENRY'S *History of Great Britain*, vol. ix. page 180.

THE END.

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